

Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance



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Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance

The Results of a Paradigm Shift
in the History of Mentality

Edited by Albrecht Classen

Walter de Gruyter · Berlin · New York



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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance : the results of a paradigm shift in the history of mentality / edited by Albrecht Classen.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 3-11-018421-4 (alk. paper)

1. Children—History. 2. Parent and child—History. I. Classen, Albrecht. II. Title.

HQ767.87.C479 2005

305.23'094'0902—dc22

2005013969

ISBN 3-11-018421-4

ISBN 978-3-11-018421-1

Bibliographic information published by Die Deutsche Bibliothek

Die Deutsche Bibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available in the Internet at [<http://dnb.ddb.de>](http://dnb.ddb.de).

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Printed in Germany

Cover design: Christopher Schneider, Berlin
Printing and binding: Hubert & Co., Göttingen

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Albrecht Classen

(University of Arizona)

Philippe Ariès and the Consequences History of Childhood, Family Relations, and Personal Emotions Where do we stand today?¹

Es "reift der sich bildende Geist langsam und stille der neuen Gestalt entgegen, löst ein Teilchen des Baus seiner vorhergehenden Welt nach dem andern auf. . . . Dies allmähliche Zerbröckeln . . . wird durch den Aufgang unterbrochen, der, ein Blitz, in einem Male das Gebilde der neuen Welt hinstellt. (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister, 1968)

Introductory Case Study

In Konrad von Würzburg's *Engelhard* (ca. 1280), a late-medieval version of the pan-European *Amicus and Amelius* narrative, the protagonist makes the heart-wrenching decision to kill his two young children because only their blood can heal his deadly sick friend Dieterich.² Engelhard argues to himself that his children would quickly gain entrance to heaven because of their innocence, speciously suggesting that their involuntary assistance in helping his friend would minimize the deadly sin of murdering his own children. But God eventually intervenes and

¹ I would like to thank Kathryn M. Rudy (Utrecht University, NL), Karen K. Jambeck (Western Connecticut State University), and Marilyn Sandidge (Westfield State College, MA) for their critical reading of this introduction. Regrettably, Rudy's excellent contribution to the symposium from which this volume resulted, could not be included. The papers by Diane Peters Auslander, Christopher Carlsmith, and Daniel F. Pigg are later and very welcome additions to this collection.

² For the Old French tradition, see *Ami and Amile*, trans. from the Old French by Samuel Danon and Samuel N. Rosenberg (York, S. C.: French Literature Publication Company, 1981); for the European and especially Middle English tradition, see *Amis and Amiloun*, ed. MacEdward Leach. Early English Text Society, O.S., 203 (London: Oxford University Press, 1937); Konrad's text is quoted from Konrad von Würzburg, *Engelhard*, ed. Paul Gereke, 2nd, newly revised ed. by Ingo Reiffenstein. Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, 17 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1963).

not only allows Dieterich to regain his health, but He also revives the children to the utmost delight of the desperate father. This literary motif might confirm the long-held belief that medieval people cared very little about children and treated them as nothing but small adults, or rather as objects necessary for the survival of society.³ Engelhard's decision, however, to kill his children, does not come easy. In fact, he is deeply tortured and grievously laments the deadly dilemma of having to decide between his love for his children and his profound love for his life-long friend: "daz leit ist zweier hande / dar in ich nû gevalle bin" (6140–41; I have been caught by two types of sorrow). He knows that he would commit the most severe crime (6160–62), but he consoles himself with the hope that his children have not yet been burdened with any earthly sin and would go straight to heaven (6163).⁴ Konrad describes in painful detail how the protagonist reaches his decision because a true friend is more valuable for him than his young children (6186–89). Dieterich, on the other hand, although he would profit from the children's blood, is horrified and severely accuses Engelhard of having committed a terrible crime against his own children (6313–19), unmistakably signaling that children are most precious and cannot simply be instrumentalized for medical purposes and should not be murdered for his own sake. In fact, after God has restored life to Engelhard's children and their father has realized this miracle, he expresses deepest gratitude and also reveals the profound extent to which he as their father had suffered when he killed them. After the wet-nurse has brought them to Engelhard, he places them on his lap and kisses them many times, crying for joy that he has regained his children (6420–21).

Is Engelhart, in his role as father, a cold-blooded monster, or does he truly display parental love at the end? What are we to make of the dialectical approach toward children in this narrative which foregrounds the notion of friendship, whereas children figure only in the background? Can we take this narrative as indicative of medieval attitudes toward children, or would we read too much into the romance with respect to thirteenth-century mentality and emotions?⁵ The

³ For a critical evaluation of older scholarship dealing with this literary motif, see Nicole Clifton, "The Function of Childhood in *Amis and Amiloun*," *Mediaevalia* 22, 1 (1998): 35–57; for the English tradition of this pan-European narrative, see Jean E. Jost's contribution to this volume.

⁴ This religious concept also undergirds the peasant girl's decision to sacrifice herself for Lord Henry in Hartmann von Aue's *Der arme Heinrich* (ca. 1190); for further discussion of this verse narrative, see David F. Tinsley's contribution to this volume.

⁵ For a most recent discussion of the family structure in Konrad's narrative, see Elisabeth Schmid, "Engelhard und Dietrich: Ein Freundespaar soll erwachsen werden," Claudia Brinker-von der Heyde and Helmut Scheuer, eds., *Familienmuster—Musterfamilien: Zur Konstruktion von Familie in der Literatur. Medien—Literaturen—Sprachen in Anglistik / Amerikanistik, Germanistik und Romanistik*, 1 (Pieterlen, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2004), 31–49. Schmid, however, surmises homosexual tendencies determining the friendship between Engelhard and Dietrich insofar as the

temptation is great to mistake the subordinate aspect of sacrificing the children as an indication of medieval disregard of parents' own offsprings unless they have already reached young adulthood. As Nicole Clifton has shown with respect to the Middle English and Old French versions of this tale, "Despite the climactic sacrifice of children, *Amis and Amiloun* demonstrates not that children in the Middle Ages were considered unimportant, nor that their parents were indifferent to their lives; it shows rather that children were perceived as emotionally charged figures, representative of life and of adult hopes, who could be used to great pathetic and ironic effect in a romance."⁶ Literary texts such as Konrad's narrative and his sources do not allow a straightforward interpretation determined by socio-historical, anthropological, and mental-historical criteria, even though they are an excellent source for a wide range of scholarly investigations as long as they are sensitive to the specific nature and informational value of narratives.

Research on the History of Childhood

On the one hand, Konrad's version of this ancient and highly popular literary tradition focuses primarily on the theme of friendship and includes the monstrous motif of killing the children only as a vehicle to profile the essential aspects of friendship in an extreme case. On the other hand, since Philippe Ariès's thesis, first published as *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien regime* in 1960, translated into English in 1962 as *Centuries of Childhood: a Social History of Family Life*, and reprinted many times thereafter,⁷ the general paradigm established by his seemingly convincing arguments implies that medieval people had no real understanding of children and treated them without the emotional intensity as was to become typical—at least in the opinion of Ariès and his myriad

former has to sacrifice his sexual maturity in exchange for the latter's healing. Male friendship, in other words, was possible only if the two partners renounced their sexuality to avoid the temptation of homosexual attraction—a most dubious thesis.

⁶ Nicole Clifton, "The Function of Childhood," 55.

⁷ Note: The English translation offers at times quite different perspectives. Ariès work was also translated into German (*Geschichte der Kindheit*, trans. Hartmut von Hentig [Munich: Hanser, 1975 [1980]], Japanese (*Kodomo no tanjō ann rejimuki no kodomo to kazoku seikatsu*, trans. Mitsonobu Sugiyama and Emiko Sugiyama [Tōkyō: Misozushobō, 1980]), Italian (*Padri e figli nell'Europa medievale e moderna*, trans. Maria Garin [Bari: Editori Laterza, 1981; Rome: Laterza, 1994]), and Spanish (*El niño y la vida familiar en el Antiguo Regimen*, trans. Naty García Guadilla [Madrid: Taurus, 1988]), and probably into other languages as well.

followers—since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁸ More poignantly, the medieval world was allegedly fixated on adults and cared little about emotions at all, except for erotic feelings between heterosexual adults.⁹ One of the consequences of Ariès's paradigm was that standard encyclopedias or major reference works on the Middle Ages simply ignore or neglect the topic 'childhood,' and by the same token many aspects we now consider essential in our investigation of emotions in the premodern period.¹⁰

This paradigm, however, which has exerted a vast influence on historiography ever since,¹¹ is increasingly undermined by a growing body of new data from many different provenances that indicate that the opposite might well have been the case. In fact, a paradigm shift is about to occur, if we are not already far beyond Ariès's thesis without having fully taken note of the overwhelming new evidence, insights, materials, perspectives, and also theoretical discussions directly aimed against the conclusions formulated in *L'Enfant et la vie familiale*. Nevertheless, in 2001 Valerie Sanders, representative of many others, blithely introduces her article on "Childhood and Life Writing" with the following blanket statement: "It was not until the 18th century that childhood was given extensive attention in life writing, although the *Confessions* of Augustine (354–430CE) is a notable

⁸ Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (1960; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 412: "Henceforth it was recognized that the child was not ready for life, and that he had to be subjected to a special treatment, a sort of quarantine, before he was allowed to join the adults."

⁹ The history of emotions continues to be a field which has not been fully discussed, see the contributions to *Emotionalität: Zur Geschichte der Gefühle*, ed. Claudia Benthien, Anne Fleig, and Ingrid Kasten (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 2000); for the special aspect of 'anger,' see *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara H. Rosenwein (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998); most recently, see *Codierungen von Emotionen im Mittelalter*, ed. C. Stephen Jaeger, Ingrid Kasten, Hendrijke Haufe, and Andrea Sieber. *Trends in Medieval Philology*, 1 (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2003), where several contributors, including Barbara H. Rosenwein, discuss new approaches to Anger Studies.

¹⁰ As impressive as *The Medieval World*, ed. Peter Linehan and Janet L. Nelson (London and New York: Routledge, 2001, paperback 2003), proves to be for the historical information, the private life of medieval man, including childhood, has been mostly ignored. Charles de La Roncière, "Tuscan Notables on the Eve of the Renaissance," *Revelations of the Medieval World*, ed. Georges Duby, trans. Arthur Goldhammer. *A History of Private Life*, II (1985; Cambridge, MA., and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1988), 157–310; here 220–224; 274–78, offers some comments, but limits himself to late-medieval examples in the world of the Tuscan society. For an older example, see Morris Bishop's otherwise excellent *The Middle Ages* (New York: American Heritage Press, 1970), where marriage is treated numerous times, but childhood not at all.

¹¹ Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1975); Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).

exception."¹² In fact, there is a disconcerting tendency even among recent scholars of psychology, social studies, and anthropology, not to speak of lay persons, to disregard growing evidence which seriously challenges Ariès's paradigm because the clear divide between the medieval past and our present—the first projected as a dark time in which children bitterly suffered, and the second presented as a positive contrast—continues to be seductively appealing, though ultimately entirely misleading, especially with respect to childhood in both periods.¹³ But, alas, myths about the 'Dark Middle Ages' sell better, it seems, than critical perspectives that take into account all the evidence available, particularly if they threaten to deconstruct our modern optimism in the absolute progressive nature of history.¹⁴ In other words, insofar as today we tend to claim that we are, of course, morally the most advanced people in world history—disregarding the Holocaust and scores of genocides all over the world during the last hundred years—we also love and treat our children in the best way possible—again disregarding the huge number of malnourished, abandoned, and victimized children¹⁵—hence people in the Middle Ages must have ignored, disrespected, and often abused their children. Otherwise we would not be entitled to claim to have

¹² Valerie Sanders, "Childhood and Life Writing," *Encyclopedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms*, ed. Margaretta Jolly. Vol. 1 (London and Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001), 203–04; here 203. For similarly misleading observations, see Nicole Clifton who, in her contribution to this volume, cites several glaring examples. See also Elizabeth A. Petroff's brief but excellent survey article, "Childhood and Child-Rearing in the Middle Ages," *Women in the Middle Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Katharina M. Wilson and Nadia Margolis (Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 2004), 170–79.

¹³ For a collection of relevant studies on medieval childhood and family, see Carol Neel, ed., *Medieval Families: Perspectives on Marriage, Household, and Children*. Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

¹⁴ See, for example, Gisela Trommsdorf, "Kindheit im Kulturvergleich," *Handbuch der Kindheit*, ed. Manfred Markelka and Bernhard Nauck (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1993), 45–65; here 56; and Karl Neumann, "Zum Wandel der Kindheit vom Ausgang des Mittelalters bis an die Schwelle des 20. Jahrhunderts," *ibid.*, 191–205; here 193. Both basically agree with Ariès, although they try to differentiate slightly on the basis of their respective research material. Trommsdorf goes even so far as to apply Ariès's findings to the situation in the Third World today, claiming that there children have mostly just an economic value. Similarly, Richard van Dülmen, *Kultur und Alltag in der Frühen Neuzeit*. Vol. 1: *Das Haus und seine Menschen*, 16.–18. Jahrhundert (Munich: Beck, 1990), 80, formulates: "Im Unterschied zu heute gab es in der frühen Neuzeit keinen einheitlichen Begriff und keine klare Vorstellung von Kindheit. Der Begriff von dieser Lebensphase bildete sich erst im Laufe des 18. Jahrhunderts heraus" (In contrast to today there was no unified notion and no clear concept of childhood in the early modern age. The concept of this phase in the life of a person developed not until the eighteenth century).

¹⁵ For statistical information, see, for instance, <http://www.jimhopper.com/abstats/#official-us> <http://www.prevent-abuse-now.com/stats.htm>; <http://www.dgkv.de/>; <http://www.jimhopper.com/abstats/#official-us> (all last accessed March 14, 2005).

improved and even optimized human society ever since. Barbara A. Hanawalt correctly points out that the "persistent use of Enlightenment thinkers to establish medieval practices makes writers such as Locke and Rousseau look as if they were offering a new view of childhood that did not exist in the Middle Ages."¹⁶ The historical evidence, however, proves to be highly contradictory in itself. While Aegidius Romanus (ca. 1247–1316) demanded that sons entirely submit under their fathers' rule, Jean Gerson (1363–1429) strongly suggested that parents pay more attention to their children's emotional needs. Mapheus Vegius (1406/1407–1458) went so far as to reprimand parents for being entirely wrong in their assumption that physical punishment was an ideal tool in education, whereas in reality threats and beating caused nothing but fear and terror and destroyed the children's psyche.¹⁷

As Thomas S. Kuhn explains in his seminal study on the *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, the "new candidate [paradigm] must seem to resolve some outstanding and generally recognized problem that can be met in no other way. Second, the new paradigm must promise to preserve a relatively large part of the concrete problem-solving ability that has accrued to science through its predecessors. Novelty for its own sake is not a desideratum in the sciences."¹⁸ Although this observation was drawn from a study of the history of science, Kuhn's observation nevertheless applies basically to all fields of human investigations, including cultural history: "testing occurs as part of the competition between two rival paradigms for the allegiance of the scientific community."¹⁹ Theories are to be challenged, and progress in our knowledge does not depend on the reconfirmation of what we have learned in the past, but on how our understanding of our world, our history, and culture transforms in light of new insights, or, whether we are able to realize paradigm shifts when critical mass has been reached to force this shift to occur.²⁰

This paradigm shift does not happen all at once, but might require a lengthy process. As Kuhn observes: "Though a generation is sometimes required to effect the change, scientific communities have again and again been converted to new

¹⁶ Barbara A. Hanawalt, "The Child in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance," *Beyond the Century of the Child: Cultural History and Developmental Psychology*, ed. Willem Koops and Michael Zuckerman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 21–42; here 41.

¹⁷ Johannes Grabmayer, *Europa im späten Mittelalter 1250–1500: Eine Kultur- und Mentalitätsgeschichte. Kultur und Mentalität* (Darmstadt: Primus, 2004), 121.

¹⁸ Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science*, 2, 2. 2nd ed. (1962; Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 169.

¹⁹ Kuhn, *The Structure*, 145.

²⁰ Kuhn, *The Structure*, 147: "It makes a great deal of sense to ask which of two actual and competing theories fits the facts better."

paradigms. Furthermore, these conversions occur not despite the fact that scientists are human but because they are."²¹ Finally, in a postscript to the 1970 edition of his study, Kuhn added the significant qualification "that all revolutions involve, among other things, the abandonment of generalizations the force of which had previously been in some part that of tautologies."²² These generalizations, however, are replaced with specifics of very different values only once the values within the "disciplinary matrix" are no longer shared by a majority of the scholarly/scientific community.

On the basis of these theoretical ruminations, let us next turn to one of the most exciting fields in Medieval Studies today, the investigation of feelings, emotions, and sentiments expressed by people in the past—the history of mentality.²³ Both sexual attractions and religious sentiments, both hatred of other cultures and religions, both people's anger and their fear of spirits and other immaterial dangers, both curiosity and nightmares, to mention just a few aspects, have attracted scholars' attention in recent years,²⁴ and consequently the intimate relationships among family members have also become the object of detailed studies.²⁵ Linda E. Mitchell now observes, "We live in a technologically advanced culture that would mystify and alarm the typical woman or man of the thirteenth—or even the eighteenth—century. Nevertheless, the emotions that motivate human action, whether they be desire for money, fame, stability, or human companionship, have not been transformed by the coming of the computer

²⁰ Kuhn, *The Structure*, 152.

²² Kuhn, *The Structure*, 183–84.

²³ One of the strongest aspects was 'fear,' see Peter Dinzelsbacher, *Angst im Mittelalter: Teufels-, Todes- und Gotteserfahrung: Mentalitätsgeschichte und Ikonographie* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1996); the other powerful emotion was love, see C. Stephen Jaeger, *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility*. The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999). For the history of emotions from a philosophical perspective, see *Emotions and Choice from Boethius to Descartes*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund and Mikko Yrjönsuuri. Studies in the History of Philosophy of Mind, 1 (Dordrecht and Boston, MA.: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002); most recently *Codierungen von Emotionen im Mittelalter*, ed. C. Stephen Jaeger et al.

²⁴ *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara H. Rosenwein; Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages*. Conjunctions of Religion & Power in the Medieval Past (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003); Peter Dinzelsbacher, *Europa im Hochmittelalter: 1050–1250. Eine Kultur- und Mentalitätsgeschichte*. Kultur und Mentalität (Darmstadt: Primus, 2003), 136–39; Jean Verdon, *Night in the Middle Ages*, trans. George Holoch (1994; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002). For a research report on the history of mentality, see Hans-Werner Goetz, *Moderne Mediävistik: Stand und Perspektiven der Mittelalterforschung* (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 1999), 276–87.

²⁵ *Medieval Families: Perspectives on Marriage, Household, and Children*, ed. Carol Neel, 2004; Michael M. Sheehan, CSB, *Marriage, Family, and Law in Medieval Europe: Collected Studies*, ed. James K. Farge (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Rüdiger Schnell, *Sexualität und Emotionalität in der vormodernen Ehe* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2002).

age." Of course, as she also alerts us, we cannot simply equate medieval with modern people, as if they were conditioned by the same cultural framework and social, political, technical, and material structures. By the same token, as Mitchell confirms, "All people are motivated by emotional responses and those responses are limited by our own chemistry: attraction, fear, hate, delight, love, lust, anxiety are all consistent with the human animal no matter the time or the place. The differences lie in how these emotions are expressed and repressed by culture. Medieval people lived in a culture that we would find alien, but they experienced emotions that we would recognize and with which we could empathize."²⁶

Certainly, when Ariès explored the history of medieval childhood, he assembled an impressive body of evidence which suggested that "Medieval art until about the twelfth century did not know childhood or did not attempt to portray it. . . . It seems more probable that there was no place for childhood in the medieval world. . . . The men of the tenth and eleventh centuries did not dwell on the image of childhood, and that that image had neither interest nor even reality for them."²⁷ Even beyond the world of the visual arts, Ariès could not detect any traces of children in their developmental identity: "childhood was simply an unimportant phase of which there was no need to keep any record; . . . there were far too many children whose survival was problematical."²⁸ Adamantly determined to demonstrate that the Middle Ages were truly different from our own time, Ariès could only conclude that there was a huge "gulf which separates our concept of childhood from that which existed before the demographic revolution or its preceding stages."²⁹

Ariès's perspectives surprisingly resemble those already pursued by Johan Huizinga in his highly influential *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1924) in which he characterized that world as childlike: "To the world when it was half a thousand years younger, the outlines of all things seemed more clearly marked than to us."³⁰ Such a black-and-white portrait of our past, however, seems to be a dangerous

²⁶ Linda E. Mitchell, *Portraits of Medieval Women: Family, Marriage, and Politics in England 1225–1350*. The New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 5. She also raises the most pertinent question: "can we deny that medieval people's attitudes toward *themselves* were any less complex? Marriages were arranged for various reasons. . . . Husbands mourned the death of wives, and wives the death of husbands. . . . Is this all that different from the emotional issues with which we struggle today?" (5). The same questions could, and must, be asked with regard to medieval adults' relationship with children.

²⁷ Ariès, *Centuries*, 33–34.

²⁸ Ariès, *Centuries*, 38.

²⁹ Ariès, *Centuries*, 39.

³⁰ J(ohan) Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages. A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought and Art in France and the Netherlands in the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (1924; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1954), 9.

simplification and assigns, on the one hand, complexity, sophistication, and rationality to the modern world, simplicity, naivete, and irrationality to the medieval society on the other.³¹ It goes without saying, however, that such categorical approaches blithely ignore important nuances and discriminations, and forgo, above all, a careful and close reading of the relevant documents, a sensitive and context-conscious interpretation of objects and texts, and all efforts at comparative anthropological research.

Shulamith Shahar was one of the first to challenge Aries more seriously. After having completed a significant study on women in the Middle Ages, she embarked on an ambitious investigation of childhood, arguing that "there was a conception of childhood, and that educational theories and norms existed."³² Many times modern scholars have confused observations about eighteenth-century children and identified their often miserable conditions with those that might have predominated in the Middle Ages. As Shahar claims, "The educational theories of the Middle Ages were, in several respects, closer to those accepted by modern psychologists and educators than were those evolved in the eighteenth century."³³ As confirmation of her claim, the author outlines the multiple medieval discussions of childhood stages, the level of primary care for infants and small children, nursing, weaning, teething, bathing, warming, and swaddling, and also individual cases of emotional relationships between parents and children. More interesting, however, prove to be those examples where medieval authors focus on children and describe their behavior, speech, and appearance in apparently realistic fashion, revealing a profound understanding of childhood as a distinct developmental stage. In St. Ida of Louvain's (ca. 1220–1230 – ca. 1300) vision, which she reported to her confessor, the mystic was allowed to assist St. Elizabeth in bathing the infant Jesus. Instead of characterizing him as a young adult, the female visionary introduces him in amazingly emotional terms as an innocent babe: "He made noise in the water by clapping hands, and as children do, splashed in the water until it spilled out and wet all those around."³⁴ Insofar as medieval authors did not shy away from mentioning children enraptured by play, and in many other typical children's activities, it seems that Aries's paradigm found, from early on, considerable criticism.³⁵ Nevertheless, as Shahar's study also

³¹ Don LePan, *The Cognitive Revolution in Western Culture*. Vol. I: *The Birth of Expectations* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, and London: Macmillan, 1989), 164–70.

³² Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 3.

³³ Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, 3.

³⁴ Quoted from Shahar, *Childhood*, 96.

³⁵ See, above all, Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); eadem, *A Lasting Relationship: Parents and Children Over Three Centuries*, compiled by L. A. Pollock (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England,

indicates, it proves to be much easier to unearth evidence of medieval approaches to nursing, raising, and educating children, and ministering to their sickness than evidence of emotive dimensions of childhood between adults and children. Surprisingly, however, Shahar concludes her study with oblique references to the Old High German *Hildebrandslied* in which neither father nor son know how to talk to each other and consequently resort to clashing with swords, leading to certain death of one or even both of them.³⁶ Moreover, Shahar also cites several *lais* from Marie de France (ca. 1200) in which the mother demonstrates no interest whatsoever in her newly born child. Almost in a complete turnaround of her arguments, Shahar here seems to imply that these texts might support Ariès's claim after all that medieval people lacked a clear understanding of childhood and did not have the same emotional bonds with their children as do modern parents.³⁷

But neither the discussion of such topoi nor the evocation of archetypes to explain the strange behaviors displayed by the mothers in Marie's *lais* allows us to reach deeper insights into the emotional conditions of medieval people.³⁸ Obviously, such a naive, maybe even questionable comparison between an early-medieval heroic epic and high-medieval courtly narratives creates a number of problems, most significantly the blatant disregard for the major transformation of medieval society since the eleventh and twelfth centuries when the collective community increasingly gave way to the individual, which in turn also led to the discovery of childhood as a specific age in human development.³⁹ Whereas Shahar inappropriately merges various centuries, Ariès primarily concentrates on the early-modern age and quickly dismisses the Middle Ages as a time when childhood did not matter that much.

As James A. Schultz argues, "the knowledge of childhood is the culturally constructed *meaning* of childhood, and literary texts are rich sources of cultural

1983).

³⁶ Shahar, *Childhood*, 256; for a detailed discussion of the *Hildebrandslied* from a communicative perspective, see Albrecht Classen, *Verzweiflung und Hoffnung: Die Suche nach der kommunikativen Gemeinschaft in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*. Beihefte zur Mediaevistik, 1 (Frankfurt a.M., Berlin, et al.: Peter Lang, 2002), 1–52.

³⁷ Shahar, *Childhood*, 256; most recently, R. Howard Bloch, in *The Anonymous Marie de France* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), developed a comprehensive analysis of the works by this poet, but he does not dwell on the issue of childhood at all, instead focuses on the relevance of appropriate speech acts; see, for example, 76–79.

³⁸ For a fresh approach to the study of emotions in the Middle Ages, see *Emotions and Sensibilities in the Middle Ages*, ed. C. Stephen Jaeger et al.

³⁹ Peter Dinzelbacher, "Individuum/Familie/Gesellschaft: Mittelalter," *Europäische Mentalitätsgeschichte: Hauptthemen in Einzeldarstellungen*, ed. Peter Dinzelbacher. Kröners Taschenausgabe, 469 (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1993), 18–38; idem, *Europa im Hochmittelalter: 1050–1250. Eine Kultur- und Mentalitätsgeschichte*. Kultur und Mentalität (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 2003), 136–39.

meaning, richer perhaps than census records or school reports. Second, the representations of children in the literary texts are themselves part of the historical knowledge of childhood."⁴⁰ But in most cases courtly poets demonstrated fairly little interest in that early stage of their protagonists and quickly focused on their young adulthood as the critical time of maturation, experiences of love, conflicts with the older generation, war, and also death. Consequently, the literary historian who focuses on courtly poets might believe that Ariès was right after all, since the courtly poets addressed primarily adult readers and refrained from providing them with intimate, emotional scenes that reflect upon the affective relationship between parents and children. Not surprisingly, Schultz concludes that not much can be said about childhood in medieval Germany, as far as his literary sources are concerned, since the courtly poets displayed relatively little interest in that age. It seems problematic, however, to argue further that on this basis children "knew that they were members of lineages but knew nothing of families in the modern sense; their social world was the household, the court, the monastery, or the school. They knew that, even though parents loved their offspring according to a law of nature, as children per se they had little status—that their behavior was foolish and their play meaningless, that they themselves lacked seriousness."⁴¹ Although Schultz probably draws incontestable conclusions from his survey of Middle High German texts, the applicability of the consequences seems less convincing, especially because he carefully eliminated the historical context and isolated the examples forming the basis of his study from the rest of medieval literature: "In general, however, their only hope for improved status was to become adults or, if they were still too young, to become *like* adults. They knew that their position on coming of age was guaranteed by their noble birth, that education, although potentially useful, was not essential to attain adult status, but that training in bookish skills was crucial for clerics."⁴²

In stark contrast, in her recent study, *Mothers and Children* (2004), Elisheva Baumgarten indicates that medieval Christians and Jews did not only share much information about childhood and medical aspects regarding mothers's and children's health, they also shared the emotional bondage between parents and their children. Moving away from a narrow focus on one type of textual sources, and discussing both historiographical, theological, and literary examples produced

⁴⁰ James A. Schultz, *The Knowledge of Childhood in the German Middle Ages, 1100–1350*. Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 14.

⁴¹ Schultz, *The Knowledge*, 265.

⁴² Schultz, *The Knowledge*, 265–66; for a critique of his findings from a historian's perspective, see Barbara A. Hanawalt, "Medievalists and the Study of Childhood," *Speculum* 77, 2 (2002): 440–60; here 444.

by French and Jewish communities, Baumgarten powerfully demonstrates how mistaken Ariès truly was in his interpretation of medieval childhood.⁴³

Children in Medieval Literature: Preliminary Case Studies

Insofar as Schultz utilized only a specific set of questions, the outcome of his investigation might also reflect a limited range of analytic tools. One important example in Wolfram von Eschenbach's famous *Parzival* sheds light on an aspect hardly touched upon by Schultz, and entirely ignored by previous scholarship on childhood as well. When the young boy Parzival grows up in the wilderness of Soltâne where his mother Herzeloyde has retired to protect her son from the dangers of knighthood and to keep him entirely for herself after the premature death of her husband, Gahmuret, he quickly turns into a most skillful hunter and can even shoot birds down from the trees.⁴⁴ But he is so young and naive that he does not understand the consequences of his own violent actions and quickly falls into despair when the birds' sweet songs come to an unexpected end: "Swenne abr er den vogel erschöz, / des schal von sange è was sô grôz, / sô weinder unde roufte sich, / an sîn hâr kært er gerich" (118, 8–10; When he shot a bird down whose singing sound had been so beautiful before, he wept and tore his hair, and took revenge on it).⁴⁵ Suddenly faced by the dead birds, Parzival runs to his mother crying, but when she asks him about the reasons, he does not know how to explain: "als kinden lîhte noch geschiht" (118, 22; as still may happen to children today).

However, once Herzeloyde has ordered all birds to be killed, young Parzival protests vehemently because he intuitively knows that these feathered creatures are entirely innocent. His mother kisses him on his lips and quickly agrees with him, referring to God in this context for the very first time in her son's life. But in

⁴³ Baumgarten, *Mothers and Children: Jewish Family Life in Medieval Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); for an extensive review, see Sarah Lipton, *The Medieval Review* (Jan. 25, 2005; online); see also Ivan Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood: Jewish Acculturation in Medieval Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996).

⁴⁴ For a discussion of Perceval in Chrétien de Troyes's *Conte du Graal*, see Debora B. Schwartz, "'A la guise de Gales l'atorna': Maternal Influence in Chrétien's *Conte du Graal*," *Essays in Medieval Studies* 12 (1995), ed. Nicole Clifton; here quoted from the online version: <http://www.luc.edu/publications/medieval/vol12/schwartz.html> (last accessed on March 14, 2005).

⁴⁵ Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*. Studienausgabe. Mittelhochdeutscher Text nach der sechsten Ausgabe von Karl Lachmann. Übersetzung von Peter Knecht. Einführung zum Text von Bernd Schiroke (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1998), 121; English translation from: Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, ed. André Lefevre. The German Library, 2 (New York: Continuum, 1991), 29.

this moment Parzival does not remain mute and inquires about the meaning of the word: "'wê muoter, waz ist got?'" (119, 17; 'Alas, mother, what is God?'). Subsequently the narrative has Parzival quickly grow up, which then allows Wolfram to focus on typical aspects in courtly romances, such as the awakening of love, the quest for knighthood, the encounter with King Arthur, youthful follies, and the desire for manly self-confirmation. Nevertheless, the short scene with the young child powerfully demonstrates that a medieval poet could understand a child's specific mentality and did not hesitate to portray its typically childish behavior and emotions, especially because they obviously foreshadow Parzival's future, at first rather ambiguous behavior toward the members of the court and also those who desperately need his help. Although the young boy does not yet know how to verbalize his feelings, his deep sorrow for the killed birds unmistakably signals his significant empathy for the suffering of others—though he had killed some of the birds himself at the beginning—which in turn will ultimately qualify him as the successor to the Grail king, both in a Christian and in a generally ethical sense.⁴⁶ Parzival causes pain, but then he also tries his best to compensate for it. Throughout the romance it seems as if he does not overcome this inclination of a childish nature.

Wolfram's remarkable literary accomplishments also find their confirmation particularly in his attentiveness to various age groups, and in allowing especially young people to speak up in his various texts. One of the most intriguing texts, the fragmentary *Titirel*, even includes a young couple who hardly know the meaning of love, yet are striving for the goal to win each other's heart. The discussion between Sigûne and Schionatulander about *minne*, as playful as it might seem, demonstrates the enormous sensitivity in Wolfram's literary narrative to reflect both upon the continued childlike naivete and, concomitantly, on the burgeoning puberty. As coquettish as Sigûne might sound when she asks her lover: "muoz ich si [minne] behalten bî den tocken? / oder fliuget minne ungerne ûf hant durh die wilde? ich kan minne wol locken?" (64, 3–4; Must I keep it with my dolls? Or does Love, untamed as it is, not like to fly to the hand? I know well enough how to lure

⁴⁶ For a study of kinship and family structures in Wolfram's other major epic, *Willehalm*, see Sylvia Stevens, *Family in Wolfram von Eschenbach's Willehalm: mîner mage triuwe ist mir wol kuont*. Studies on Themes and Motifs in Literature, 18 (New York, Washington, D.C., et al.: Peter Lang, 1997). See also Christopher Young, "Obie und Obilot: Zur Kultur und Natur der Kindheit in Wolframs *Parzival*," *Natur und Kultur in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*, ed. Alan Robertshaw and Gerhard Wolf (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1999), 243–52. He poignantly emphasizes, 250: "Die Kindlichkeit der kleinen Obilot wird dem Publikum durchgehend in erhöhter Plastizität vor Augen geführt. . . . Dem Wortlaut ihres großen Gesprächs mit dem Helden kann man auch entnehmen, daß sie nicht immer alles genau versteht, was sie sagt. Alles in allem bleibt Obilot von Anfang bis Ende ein Kind."

Love.”),⁴⁷ she truly straddles both worlds in her personal development, still being a child, but having already entered the pubescent stage. The same applies to the young Obilôt who quickly chooses Gâwân as the knight of her heart (*Parzival*, Book VII) although she has definitely not yet grown, as the narrative clearly indicates, out of her childhood. On the one hand she continues to be involved in childish games (“diu zwei snalten vingerlin,” 368, 12; ‘tossing rings’), on the other, she knows well how to play the role of Gâwân’s young mistress: “ob ir des, hêrre, ruochet, / ich wil iu geben minne / mit herzenlichen sinne” (369, 28–30; If it is pleasing to you, My Lord, I shall give you love with heartfelt sentiment).

The same observation can often be made with respect to the portrayal of young protagonists in various courtly romances, especially from the thirteenth century, whether we think of *Floire and Blanchefleur*, the *Roman de Renart*, *Mai und Beaflor*, or *Aucassin and Nicolette*.⁴⁸ Considering the usual courtly audience during the High and Late Middle Ages in a general sense, it does not surprise us that most poets focused primarily on their protagonists’ adult life and typical problems connected with young adulthood. Nevertheless, when an opportunity arose to discuss parental love, courtly poets did not shy away from this at all. In *Floire and Blanschefleur*, for instance, the Christian slave, Blanschefleur’s mother, raises the two children most tenderly, loves them for what they are, and does not make a difference between them with regard to their religion or origin: “El le nourri molt gentement / et garda ententivement / plus que sa fille, et ne savoit / le quel des .ii. plus cier avoit” (185–88; The Christian reared him tenderly, / More than her own child. Nor did she / Within her heart distinguish clearly / Which of the two she loved more dearly” [183–86]).⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Titarel*. Herausgegeben, übersetzt und mit einem Stellenkommentar sowie einer Einführung versehen von Helmut Brackert und Stephan Fuchs-Jolie (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2003); for an English translation, see Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Titarel and the Songs*. Texts and Translations with Introduction, Notes and Comments by Marion E. Gibbs and Sidney M. Johnson. Garland Library of Medieval Literature, Series A, 57 (New York and London: Garland, 1988). I have discussed the element of childish love in my “Wolframs von Eschenbach *Titarel*-Fragmente und Johanns von Würzburg *Wilhelm von Österreich*: Höhepunkte der höfischen Minnereden,” *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik* 37 (1993): 75–102.

⁴⁸ François Berriot, “Enfances et initiation du héros dans le roman français des XII^e et XIII^e siècles,” *Autour de l’enfance*, ed. Evelyne Berriot-Salvadore and Isabelle Pebay-Clottes (Biarritz: atlantica, 1999), 31–43.

⁴⁹ *Le Conte de Floire et Blancheflor*, ed. Jean-Luc Leclanche. Les classiques français du Moyen Âge, 105 (Paris: Librairie Honore Champion, 1980); for the English translation, see *The Romance of Floire and Blanchefleur. A French Idyllic Poem of the Twelfth Century*. Trans. into English Verse by Merton Jerome Hubert. University of North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, 63 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1966).

When Floire has reached the age of five and is handed over to a teacher, his intensive attachment to Blanchefleur comes to the fore since he cries and screams until the girl is also allowed to learn with him. The father at first feels disinclined, but because of his love for his son he gives his permission: "Por vostre amor" (215; For love of you [209]). Of course, the subsequent events lead directly to their passionate love affair with many complications, but the preparatory narrative strongly emphasizes both their childish behavior, their playing and frolicking, and their eagerness to learn everything from their teacher (239–67 [235–62]). Significantly, we also detect in the behavior of Floire's mother how much she is concerned about his well-being and how much she worries about her young child. After Floire has almost committed suicide out of despair because of Blanchefleur's alleged death, the queen weepingly addresses the king and reminds him that Floire is their only child. Although she herself had devised the devious plan to pretend that the girl had died, whereas she had been sold to merchants instead, now the mother makes every possible effort to rescue her son from his depressions and facilitate his search for his beloved. When she discusses the situation with the king, she emphasizes, above all, that Floire is their only child: "De tous enfans plus n'en avons, / et cestui de gré si perdons!" (1057–58; We have no children save this boy, / Whom by our own choice we destroy [852–53]), thereby appealing to his fatherly feelings, which indeed sways him to agree with her decision. Once the secret has been revealed and Floire has made up his plans to search for his beloved, his father makes one final attempt to hold him back, but he has to accede, and then he provides enormous treasures for his son to embark on his dangerous enterprise. Whereas before he seemed to be the typically tyrannical father, caring little about his son's own wishes, he now reveals how much he is emotionally attached to his son, breaking out in tears because he is afraid of not seeing his son again: "Li rois en plorant l'a doné" (1223; 924). It is a rare moment in medieval literature, but here we observe a father who indeed expresses deep love for his son and cannot even hold back his tears when he realizes that his son will leave home on his quest for Blanchefleur.⁵⁰

The often stated fact that children emerge only rarely in courtly literature could simply be explained with the usual narrative emphasis on young love, chivalric accomplishments, and exploration of the world, and with the absence of a biographical framework which would take us from the protagonist's childhood

⁵⁰ For a most recent discussion of this verse narrative, see Lynn Shuttles, "Christian Love or Pagan Transgression? Marriage and Conversion in *Floire et Blancheflor*," *Discourses on Love, Marriage, and Transgression in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*, ed. Albrecht Classen. *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies*, 278 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2004 [appeared in 2005]), 85–108.

to his or her death (see the exception of Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*). Even today, adult literature—here not understood in the erotic, or pornographic, context—commonly deals with adult issues, and only when a character's entire life is to be examined, then does his or her childhood also play a significant role. In most cases modern novels, written for an adult audience, refrain from the childhood theme; instead they deal with existential issues, explore love and death in adult life, and examine individual destinies, determined by their jobs, their social environment, their families, and their personal character. Of course, the vast body of modern children's literature, literature for young readers, and accounts of childhood would have to be included in our investigation, but then we are dealing with quite a different genre and a separate reading audience from an entirely different time and culture.⁵¹

The vast majority of courtly romances limit themselves to a number of specific events, such as the struggle to win the heart of a beloved woman, to overcome military and political problems, confrontation with monsters, giants, dwarfs, and wild beasts, travel experiences, and family conflicts.⁵² Neither Chrétien de Troyes nor Hartmann von Aue hardly ever mentions children in their romances, and Andreas Capellanus and Juan Ruiz addressed only young adults who had questions about love. Marie de France occasionally includes children in her *Lais*, but only in passing, and then she has them grow up fast, often in the house of a relative and with little attachment to their biological parents. A careful analysis would, however, reveal that the female characters often have no choice and cannot afford to keep their own children, whether this was painful for them or not. As Juanita Feros Ruys points out, this very situation applied to famous Heloise who had no alternative but to "foster out her child . . . for the rather less romantic reason that there were no alternatives available to her."⁵³ By the same token, the famous narrative, allegorical poems, tales, and treatises by Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch don't shed any significant light on childhood, but this does not mean that these poets did not care about children as such. Instead, their focus rested on concerns closest to their own adult lives and those of their audiences. More

⁵¹ However, as we are beginning to learn, there was a whole corpus of specific children's literature in the Middle Ages, see *Medieval Literature for Children*, ed. Daniel T. Kline (New York and London: Routledge, 2003).

⁵² Claudia Brinker-von der Heyde, "Familienmodelle in mittelalterlicher Literatur: ein Überblick," eadem and Helmut Scheuer, eds., *Familienmuster*, 13–30. Her structural approach blinds her, however, to the important relationship between parents and children which the contributors to this volume will examine in extensive details.

⁵³ Juanita Feros Ruys, "Playing Alterity: Heloise, Rhetoric, and Memoria," *Maistresse of My Wit: Medieval Women, Modern Scholars*, ed. Louise D'Arcens and Juanita Feros Ruys. Making the Middle Ages, 7 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 211–43; here 230–31.

specifically, both in *Erec* and in *Yvain/Iwein* (either by Chrétien de Troyes or by Hartmann von Aue) the central issue focuses on critical questions concerning the gender conflict, both inside and outside of marriage, whereas we do not hear of any pregnancy or childbirth.⁵⁴ In other words, we should not look for children in medieval literature where they do not play any significant role, and then argue that they were disregarded altogether in that culture.

Almost the same dialectical conditions inform the rich tradition of *Tristan* romances, even though Gottfried von Strassbourg includes a short description of young Tristan's education process. He entirely ignores the protagonist's emotional dilemma and hardly allows him to express his feelings of fear, forlornness, and insecurity when, at the age of fourteen, he is kidnapped by the Norwegian merchants. Nevertheless, as soon as Tristan has realized what is happening, seeing the coastline disappearing fast, he breaks out in bitter tears: "Tristan der arme der huop dô / sô jaemerlichez clagen an, daz Curvenal sîn vriunt began / mit ime von herzen weinen" (2332–35; Tristan raised such a pitiful dirge that his friend Curvenal began to weep with him from the bottom of his heart).⁵⁵

Hartmann von Aue offers an intriguing window into the world of childhood in his verse novella *Der arme Heinrich* (*Poor Henry*). He explores the curious love relationship between Lord Henry (Heinrich), who suffers from leprosy and can only be healed with the blood of a virgin who would willingly die for him, and a peasant girl who wants to volunteer and can eventually convince both her parents and Henry that she herself would their lord's remedy. In terms of our investigation of childhood, the same shift in the narrative focus can be observed, which in turn explains why medieval poets pay relatively little attention to children. The medical doctor in Salerno emphasizes that the virgin must be a nubile woman ("manbære," 225) and cannot be under age—in modern parlance. This adds an important element of eroticism to the struggle against Henry's death, but at the end the protagonist does not accept her sacrifice because he suddenly realizes not only her female beauty, but also the beauty of the human creation which cannot be killed in order to save another life. Subsequently God intervenes and restores

⁵³ Rosemary Deist, *Gender and Power: Counsellors and their Masters in Antiquity and Medieval Courtly Romance*. Beiträge zur älteren Literaturgeschichte (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2003), 48–84; Alexandra Sterling-Hellenbrand, *Topographies of Gender in Middle High German Arthurian Romance*. Medieval History and Culture (New York and London: Garland, 2001), 17–23, 41–84.

⁵⁵ Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan*. Nach dem Text von Friedrich Ranke neu herausgegeben, ins Neuhochdeutsche übersetzt, mit einem Stellenkommentar und einem Nachwort von Rüdiger Krohn (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1980); for the English translation, see Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan*. Translated entire for the first time. With the surviving fragments of the *Tristan* of Thomas. With an Introduction by A. T. Hatto (1962; London: Penguin, 1967), 72.

Henry's health because of the change of his heart, and the protagonist marries the young woman.

The narrative pays relatively little attention to the girl, who remains unnamed throughout the entire verse novella, even though we hear a few comments about her quick maturation into a young adult because Henry stays at her father's farm for three years before he finally divulges the secret of the only but elusive remedy for himself. When the protagonist moves to the farm, the peasant's daughter is only eight years old—twelve according to other manuscripts—and immediately develops a strong liking for her lord whom she tends constantly and unfailingly (303–10).⁵⁶ Whereas all other siblings or family members flee from Henry's presence, the young girl "vlôch si zallen stunden / zim und niender anderswar" (318–19; But she fled to him all the time and nowhere else). The narrator emphasizes her childish goodness which motivates her to spend her time entirely at his feet. Henry rewards her with little gifts "zuo ir kintlichen spil" (331; for her childish games), but these gifts are not quite as innocent as the narrator wants us to believe: "spiegel unde hârbant / und swaz kinden liep solde sîn, / gürtel unde vingerlîn" (336–38; a mirror, hair ribbons—whatever children enjoy—a belt and a ring). Although intended as simple toys, all these objects clearly carry an erotic symbolism, and not surprisingly Henry soon begins to call the girl "sîn gemahel" (341; his bride). The subsequent development quickly reveals that the relationship between Henry and the girl indeed is based on love, though neither of them can openly address this issue because of the huge class difference and because of Henry's almost certain and imminent death. Her sacrifice is obviously intended as a substitution for the desired union with Henry, so their marriage at the end, after she has been rescued and Henry has been miraculously healed, represents the crowning of a long-term love relationship.⁵⁷

Again we observe that the girl's childhood does not play a significant role, insofar as the focus rests on the spiritual healing process, the girl's adamant dedication to Henry, her unbreakable willingness to sacrifice herself for him, and her stupendous rhetorical skills with which she can convince both her parents and Henry, and finally also the medical doctor in Salerno, to accept her as a virginal

⁵⁶ *Der arme Heinrich*. Herausgegeben von Hermann Paul. 16., neu bearbeitete Auflage besorgt von Kurt Gärtner. Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, 3 (1882; Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996); for an English translation see *Eroticism and Love in the Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen, 5th ed. (1994; New York: Forbes, 2004).

⁵⁷ For a slightly different reading, relying on spiritual symbolism according to which the girl in reality represents Henry's soul, see Albrecht Classen's "Herz und Seele in Hartmanns von Aue 'Der arme Heinrich.'" *Der mittelalterliche Dichter als Psychologe?*, *Mediaevistik* 14 (2003): 7–30; for a recent religious reading, see David Duckworth, "Heinrich and the Power of Love in Hartmann's Poem," *ibid.*, 31–82.

sacrifice for Henry's recovery.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, even though only for a short glimpse, the narrative sheds light on the world of a young girl and portrays her in her childish behavior, thinking, and attitudes. As soon as she has learned of the possible treatment for Henry, she seems to undergo a tremendous transformation and emerges as a most prolific orator of highly advanced intelligence. In light of the doctor's explanation, however, the sacrifice needs to be a pubescent or nubile woman, so the narrative is forced to accelerate her personal development in a fast pace. Yet, the development itself happens almost in front of our eyes, which indirectly allows us to pursue it backwards where we discover, once again, a young girl, indeed, whom the narrator characterizes as "güetlichen" (305; good). He adds: "si was ouch sô genæme / daz si wol gezæme / ze kinde dem rîche / an ir wætliche" (311–14; She had such a pleasing way about her that she could have fittingly been the child of the emperor in her loveliness). The narrator portrays this child in the most endearing terms and signals that everyone who saw her felt immediately attracted to her, but not in an erotic fashion, instead in the way that adults feel charmed by a child.

Irrespective of these obvious reflections of childhood per se in the primary sources, many modern scholars continue to accept blithely the paradigm that Aries had established as a basis for their own research and argue, for instance, that medieval mothers knew no real feelings for their infant children, which in many cases led to the death of their children in the first place, or that they deliberately repressed their emotional attachments to their infants because of the high mortality rate.⁵⁹ The extraordinary example of the mother of the peasant girl in Hartmann's verse narrative, who bitterly fights against her daughter's decision, clearly expressing her desperate love for her suicidal daughter, begging her not to hurt her parents, whose heart would break in case of her death (631–622d), clearly suggests the opposite: most medieval parents felt very strongly for their children and took all necessary steps in taking care of them both in physical and emotional terms.⁶⁰ It might well be that modern scholars have confused the rather abysmal situation for children in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—but there again only in the world of child labor—with the actual conditions in the Middle Ages.

⁵⁸ For an intriguing comparison of Hartmann's tale with hagiographical literature, see David Tinsley's contribution to this volume.

⁵⁹ *Medieval Mothering*, ed. John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler. New Middle Ages, 3 (1996; New York and London: Routledge, 1999).

⁶⁰ See the contributions by Eva Parra Membrives and Juanita Feros Ruys to this volume who both confirm that medieval mothers certainly expressed deep love for their children. Both authors also emphasize that this maternal love was explicitly formulated in the relevant literary sources. See also Clarissa W. Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991).

Furthermore, when we discuss medieval childhood, we need to differentiate considerably between children from the noble class and children from the lower class with regard to their upbringing and nutrition, care and education.⁶¹

Comparative and Interdisciplinary Approaches

Apparently, the investigation of childhood in premodern times has been severely hampered by the disinclination of many scholars to work on an interdisciplinary level and to use comparative approaches, which could include art history and religious study, history of mentality and literary studies.⁶² In particular, to comprehend medieval childhood fully in its historical and psychological dimensions requires more than a superficial examination of historical records. As we have observed above, both literary sources and historical documents, both art history material and psychological perspectives need to be consulted with respect to this highly complex topic. It would also not be enough to take into account only medieval courtly literature, or heroic epics, especially because both focus, by their own nature, on the world of adults either within the setting of the courts or within a military society where there was no room for children. In fact, no society spends much, if any time, on children if it is under military attack from the outside or faces severe challenges from the inside.

Only once a society enjoys extensive leisure time and offers the luxury to the individual to withdraw into an interior space, do themes concerning children, the family structure, and also erotic love emerge as well. By the same token, our modern understanding of the emotional relationship between husband and wife in the Middle Ages still suffers from profound misunderstandings derived from early-modern concepts of the family in which the husband ruled as the *paterfamilias* and emotions were basically banned from marriages. We are, of course, dealing with stereotypes and projections onto the Middle Ages that find little support in the actual historical and literary sources, but nevertheless are highly effective among the modern readership deeply shaped by "pastism" as the allegedly only possible approach to earlier periods in human history. This methodology

⁶¹ For a good overview of the relevant studies published post-Ariès, see Mathias Beer, *Eltern und Kinder des späten Mittelalters in ihren Briefen: Familienleben in der Stadt des Spätmittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit mit besonderer Berücksichtigung Nürnbergs (1400–1550)*. Nürnberger Werkstücke zur Stadt- und Landesgeschichte, 44 (Nuremberg: Stadtarchiv Nürnberg, 1990), 12–22.

⁶² A good example to the contrary proves to be Danièle Alexandre-Bidon and Didier Lett, *Children in the Middle Ages: Fifth – Fifteenth Centuries*. Preface by Pierre Riche. Trans. Jody Gladding. The Laura Shannon Series in French Medieval Studies (1997; Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1999).

"resolutely reifies alterity, positing a fundamental gulf of understanding between ourselves and our medieval subjects."⁶³ Paradigms, often because of their mythical character and comfortable insinuation that a certain phenomenon is fully explained, tend to resist challenges and viscerally oppose any criticism against their basic premises. The very nature of scholarship, however, consists of the relentless and critical examination of our fundamental concepts and of raising often uncomfortable questions. This also applies to the history of childhood and family relationship in premodern times.⁶⁴

The other major problem in our investigation of children proves to be not a historical, but an anthropological constant: adults tend not to discuss children seriously and instead elaborate on adult affairs in public, whereas the situation within the domestic sphere seems to be entirely different. Medieval people cannot be expected to provide more information about children, for example, in literary sources, than modern writers do. But our investigation of how childhood was perceived in earlier times cannot limit itself to courtly literature, heroic epics, political chronicles, and scientific texts. We also need to take into account hagiographical sources, urban and clerical records, accounts of accidents, and paintings and sculptures. As Robert C. Finucane alerts us, medieval "[a]dults realized that certain types of behavior were normal aspects of childhood. This awareness was acknowledged time after time in the miracle reports; children exhibited 'childish zeal,' 'youthful excess,' 'childish playfulness'; their accidents followed behavior 'typical of children' or infants."⁶⁵

This phenomenon forces us to reconsider how we reach historical insights in the first place, and what sources we use to draw our conclusions from in general. As long as we ourselves do not develop specific interests in childhood, we will also ignore those texts that address children and their education. The reasons for this shortcoming are quite easy to understand because, first, we as adult scholars tend to be primarily interested in adult concerns, and so children figure only secondarily in medieval studies. Second, modern scholars have only recently

⁶³ Juanita Feros Ruys, "Playing Alterity," 2004, 213.

⁶⁴ A. Wilson, "The Infancy of the History of Childhood: an Appraisal of Philippe Aries," *History and Theory* 19 (1980): 132–53; Matthias Winter, *Kindheit und Jugend im Mittelalter*. HochschulSammlung Philosophie. Geschichte, 6 (Freiburg: HochschulVerlag, 1984); Linda Patterson, "L'enfant das la littérature occitane avant 1230," *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 32 (1989): 233–45; Ursula Peters, "Familienhistorie als neues Paradigma der mittelalterlichen Literaturgeschichte," *Modernes Mittelalter: Neue Bilder einer populären Epoche*, ed. Joachim Heinze (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel, 1994), 134–62.

⁶⁵ Finucane, *The Rescue of the Innocents: Endangered Children in Medieval Miracles* (1997; New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.), 10; see also Barbara Schuh, "Jenseitigkeit in diesseitigen Formen": sozial- und mentalitätsgeschichtliche Aspekte spätmittelalterlicher Mirakelberichte. Schriftenreihe des Instituts für Geschichte, Darstellungen, 3 (Graz: Leykam, 1989), 105.

begun to explore the history of emotions and continue to shy away from making forays into the world of sentiments and feelings as displayed by medieval people.⁶⁶ Fortunately, this has changed to some extent both in critical response to Aries's thesis and in light of many new medieval sources which lie outside of the traditional framework of literary investigations, yet offer significant insights into medieval mentality. Modern scholarship has certainly responded to the challenge by Mary Martin McLaughlin when she deplored a significant desideratum: "the history of their experience [the children's] of this life remains to be written; our impressions of it have been based largely on the monastic constitutions and customs which, in their careful provisions for these youngest members of masculine communities, suggest a life of almost intolerable rigor and confinement."⁶⁷ Nevertheless, both our methodological approaches to medieval childhood and our selection of relevant documents need to be refined and sensitized, which this volume attempts to deal with.

Miracle reports from the entire Middle Ages, for instance, suggest that parents were deeply afflicted by their children's death and accidents, including parents from all social classes and all geographical provenances. In Finucane's words: "the examples suggest that in medieval grief for children, overtly emotional behavior by women was expected or at least tolerated; among men, displays of grief were less expected, and, in fact, may have been felt to be inappropriate for them."⁶⁸

As in so many cases, new perspectives toward the medieval past cannot be easily gained without innovative approaches, mostly interdisciplinary in nature. This is also the case with childhood which requires the combination of literary and historical sources, of architectural and archeological evidence, of musical and art historical documents. Moreover, children represent a group within society that does not normally accord them much space in the official records, even though they play an important role. As Sally Crawford emphasizes, children "are both within the boundaries of 'normal' society, learning how to occupy their place in it, but they are also outsiders, a group apart, with their own particular requirements and rules. Because of this, evidence demonstrating adult attitudes towards children tends to be conflicting and baffling, but children as a distinctive group to whom distinctive rules apply, are worthy of separate and intensive study . . ."⁶⁹

⁶⁶ The contributors to *Emotions and Sensibilities in the Middle Ages*, explore manifestations of anger, wrath, fear of death, bitterness and frustration, mourning, rage, desire, and insecurity, but none of them endeavors to investigate adults' feelings toward children.

⁶⁷ Martin McLaughlin, "Survivors and Surrogates: Children and Parents from the Ninth to the Thirteenth Centuries," *The History of Childhood*, ed. Lloyd deMause (New York: Psychohistory Press, 1974), 101–81; here 130.

⁶⁸ Finucane, *The Rescue*, 158.

⁶⁹ Sally Crawford, *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England* (Thrupp, Stroud, Gloucestershire, 1999), xvii.

This also necessitates a careful examination of those sources that normally lie outside of the horizon of literary and historical scholarship, such as burial sites, toys, genre scenes in paintings, linguistic evidence, manuscript illustrations, and also buildings.⁷⁰ Often, however, it seems as if modern scholars, deeply influenced by Ariès, approach the topic with the only purpose in mind to confirm that childhood was not discovered until the modern age, whereas before people badly mistreated their children, neglected them, or regularly spanked them brutally, if they did not even kill them in times of famine. Lloyd de Mause, Edward Shorter, Richard Lyman, and Shulamith Firestone uncritically pursued this perspective,⁷¹ not to mention cohorts of subsequent authors both in scholarly and non-scholarly literature. However, only a quick look into Bartholomew Anglicus's famous encyclopedia *De proprietatibus rerum* (ca. 1245) would confirm that medieval people had a very clear idea of what childhood meant and how to evaluate childish behavior without resorting to adult norms and ideals. As he says in his chapter "De puero" (here in John Trevisa's translation from 1398):

And þerfore [for] purenes of kynde innocence suche children ben iclepid *pueri*. So seiþ Isidre. Þan soche children [ben] neisch of fleisch, lethy and pliant of body, abel and liȝt to meuyng, witty to lerne caroles, and wiþoute busines, and þey lede here lif wiþoute care and busines and tellen pris onliche of merþe and likyng, and dreden no perile more þan betinge wiþ a ȝerde. And þey louen an appil more þan gold.⁷²

⁷⁰ Hansueli F. Etter and Jörg E. Schneider, "Zur Stellung von Kind und Frau im Frühmittelalter. Eine archäologische-anthropologische Synthese," *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 39 (1982): 48–57; Hans-Werner Goetz, *Life in the Middle Ages from the Seventh to the Thirteenth Century*. Trans. Albert Wimmer, ed. Steven Rowan (1986; Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 54.

⁷¹ Lloyd deMause, "The Evolution of Parent-Child Relationships as a Factor in History," *idem*, ed., *The History of Childhood*, 1–71; Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (London: Collins, 1976); Richard Lyman, "Barbarism and Religion: Late Roman and Early Medieval Childhood," Lloyd deMause, ed., *The History of Childhood*, 75–100; Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: the Case for Feminist Revolution* (London: Cape, 1971).

⁷² *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomæus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum. A Critical Text* [ed. M. C. Seymour et al.] (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1975), vol. 1, 300. See also M. C. Seymour et al., *Bartholomæus Anglicus and His Encyclopedia* (Aldershot, Hampshire, and Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1992). For a critical discussion of the manuscript tradition and the reception of the encyclopedia, see Heinz Meyer, *Die Enzyklopädie des Bartholomäus Anglicus: Untersuchungen zur Überlieferungs- und Rezeptionsgeschichte von 'De Proprietatibus Rerum'*. Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften, 77 (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2000); here 379–81 (for Trevisa).

Further, as Bartholomæus emphasizes:

Sep smale children often han iuel maneres and tacchis, and pinken onliche on þinges þat beþ and recchiþ nouȝt of thingis þat schal be, hy loueþ playes and game and venytes and forsake most þingis worth, and aȝenward, for most worth þey holde lest worth or nouȝt worth. Þey desiren þat is to hem contrarye and greouous, and tellen more of þe ymage of a childe þan of þe ymage of a man, and maken sorowe and woo and wepiþ more for þe losse of an appil þanne fore þe losse of þeire heritage . . . Þey desiren and coueiten alle þinges þat þey see, and prayeþ and askeþ hem wiþ voys and wiþ honde . . . They holde no counsaile but þey wreyen and tellen out alle þat þey see and here. Sodeynly þey lauȝe and sodeynly þey wepe (301).

Considering that Bartholomæus approaches his topic as an encyclopedist, primarily interested in covering every possible aspect in human life and in nature, and considering that he drew his information mostly from the learned tradition, not having experienced fatherhood himself, unless as an observer and bystander, we can safely argue that he had a sharp eye and a solid understanding of human nature, clearly signaling to us that those medieval writers who set themselves to the task to discuss childhood knew very well how to describe it in an insightful, sensitive, and realistic manner. In other words, Bartholomæus understood childhood, accepted children as what they are, and informed his adult readers about children's typical behavior, desires, and abilities.

One fascinating example of how much even the Anglo-Saxons were aware of the typical world of childhood can be drawn from linguistics evidence since "the Anglo-Saxons not only had words for children (*cild*, *bearn*), but also for the state of childhood (*cildhad*), and, perhaps most importantly, could identify and describe behaviour relevant to childhood: childish (*cildisc*), childishness (*cildsung*)."⁷³ Even though burial sites generally do not indicate a particular dedication to children, all evidence points to considerable medical care given to children: "The number of remedies dealing with conception and childbirth, coupled with the complete absence of any contraceptive remedies, seems to imply that children were very much wanted, and women would go to some lengths to secure a child."⁷⁴ Although it is much harder to determine the level of emotional bonding between mother and child during those early times, even here many burial sites confirm "that when mothers and children died at the same time it was appropriate that they should be buried together in this sympathetic manner," meaning "where the skeletons of females are found with their arms curled round the bodies of infants.

...⁷⁵

⁷³ Crawford, *Childhood*, 45.

⁷⁴ Crawford, *Childhood*, 101.

⁷⁵ Crawford, *Childhood*, 117 and 116.

Anglo-Saxon fathers also seem to have taken an active role in the raising of their children, and often expressed their care, concern, and love for children through their wills, their daily contacts with their children, and in personal reflections. King Ælfred, at the conclusion of his translation of Boethius's *De consolazione philosophiae*, offered the noteworthy comment "many a man would wish that he himself should die, rather than behold his wife and children dying."⁷⁶ Of course, the early-medieval sources spend much less time on intimate aspects pertaining to the family for a number of obvious reasons, but children were not simply banned from their mental horizon.

In his contorted manner, the father figure Hildebrand in the eponymous heroic ballad *Hildebrandslied* (ca. 820 C. E.) seems to display similar emotions toward his son whom he encounters for the first time after he himself has spent thirty years in exile, except that both know only how to talk with each other in military terms and cannot overcome the deep distrust against each other, especially since the son Hadubrand is convinced of his father's death and does not recognize the man in the Hunnish armor. The less Hildebrand knows how to reach out to his son, the more his clumsy gesture with the gold rings which he would like to give his son as gifts reveals his desperate attempt to reach out to the young man.⁷⁷ He does not even use the term 'father' or 'son,' instead he describes his motive as "huldi" (35; grace, friendship, mercy, also pity), failing even further in expressing his true feelings. The poet, however, would not have presented this most awkward scene of father and son which reflects nothing but the devastating consequences of a purely military culture where there is no room for family and paternal love, if he had not intended it as a sort of criticism.⁷⁸

Actually, many sources from the early Middle Ages provide remarkable insights into childhood and reveal how much both theologians and chroniclers cared about that early developmental stage. In a report about the miraculous healing power of the tomb of Saint Martin of Tours (before 594 C.E.), a young boy whose mother had died shortly after his birth and who is in danger of following her soon because of lack of food and a severe fever, quickly recovers as soon as the desperate father has placed him on the tomb. The author, Bishop Gregory of Tours, hardly pays attention to the father since his primary intention is to highlight the healing power

⁷⁶ King Alfred's *Anglo-Saxon Version of Boethius De Consolatione Philosophiae*, with a Literal English Translation, Notes, and Glossary, by Samuel Fox (1864; New York: AMS Press, 1970), 31; see also Crawford, *Childhood*, 117 (though she does not provide any reference for her slightly different quote).

⁷⁷ William C. McDonald, "'Too softly a gift of treasure': A Reading of the Old High German *Hildebrandslied*," *Euphorion* 78 (1984): 1–16.

⁷⁸ *Althochdeutsche Literatur: Eine Textauswahl mit Übertragungen*, ed. Horst Dieter Schlosser (Berlin: Schmidt, 1998), 60–63.

of the saint. But in a short subordinate clause he briefly describes the father's behavior in face of his son's imminent death: "patre heulante," which signals the deep pain he felt seeing his baby boy fading away fast, wherefore he turns to the ultimate resort, the saint's tomb.⁷⁹ In Gerhard's *Vita sancti Oudalrici episcopi Augustani* (tenth century), an almost moribund child is rescued only because a cleric advises the parents to wean the child and to give him solid food. Thereafter the child quickly recovers and turns into a delightful child whom the parents regard with great joy and proudly display to the people around them: "gratanter eum intuerentur et aliis ostenderent."⁸⁰

In the *Magna Vita Sancti Hugonis* (prior to 1200) we come across a remarkable account of the delight with which Bishop Hugo baptized the child and suddenly developed an almost intimate exchange with the infant who smiled at him and moved its body, apparently to signal its joy about the fatherly figure. The babe took the bishop's hand and licked at it for a while, and both apparently felt a deep sense of happiness about each other: "Pontifice infanti et infante pontifici, inauditum de se inuicem spectaculum delectabiliter exhibente, stupebant qui aderant."⁸¹ Although those who were present at the baptism expressed their great surprise about this phenomenon, the narrator openly admits his delight with the wonderful child who seemed to be obsessed with the bishop and even rejected the arms of the wet nurse when she wanted to take the child out of the bishop's hands: "Ipsius quoque nutricis que eum gestabat, cum quodam fastidio manus sibi admotas respuens, oculis in episcopum intendebat, manibus illi applaudebat, ore indesinenter arridebat."⁸²

The *Vita Mathildis posterior* (*The "Later Life" of Queen Mathilda*) offers two intriguing examples of how emotionally bound women could be both to their own children and their grandchildren. Queen Mathilda (ca. 890/895–968) was married to King Henry I of Germany (ca. 876–936) and enjoyed tremendous respect among her contemporaries both as a public figure and as a saintly person. Nevertheless, the anonymous author of her *Vita* also reveals how much she suffered emotionally when she received news of her son Henry's death in 955:

When the glorious queen learned from the letter that her beloved son had passed away, her visage grew pale; a cold shiver shook her entire body, and she buried her face in the book which she held in her hands. As soon as her shock began to wear off, she suddenly burst into tears and spent the entire day weeping, eating nothing that

⁷⁹ *Quellen zur Alltagsgeschichte im Früh- und Hochmittelalter*. Ausgewählt und übersetzt von Ulrich Nonn (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2003), 104.

⁸⁰ *Quellen zur Alltagsgeschichte*, 106.

⁸¹ *Quellen zur Alltagsgeschichte*, 110.

⁸² *Quellen zur Alltagsgeschichte*, 110.

day on account of her bitter grief. Then, after gathering all of the nuns in the chapel, she beseeched them to beg the Lord's mercy for the deceased, and falling to her knees poured forth the following prayer for her dear son's soul.⁸³

Although Henry had been an adult at that time, the mother demonstrated her intense affective bonds with her youngest child particularly at this final moment. In the same *Vita*, we also witness Mathilda in her role as grandmother who is deeply endeared by her grandson. The biographer did not hesitate to describe the following scene:

Just as the venerable queen loved Henry more than her other children, so too did she love his son Henry, her little grandson, more than her other grandchildren. As the venerable Mathilda seated herself at the royal banquet table next to Queen Adelheid, the young ones ran about nearby, absorbed in their childish games. Then Henry, who was particularly beloved by God's holy one, approached the royal table, and gazing lovingly at his illustrious grandmother crawled into her lap in hopes of a kiss from her. The venerable queen happily picked him up and hugged him close, saying: 'Lord God almighty, we praise you and give you thanks for keeping safe our little grandson, whose father the dark day of death snatched away. . . . We beseech you to protect him as long as you grant us mortal life, so that he might at least remind us of our beloved son Henry in his name and in his speech.'⁸⁴

Both as a queen and as a mother, and so also as a grandmother, Mathilda is portrayed as a woman with intense feelings for her children and grandchildren. It would be highly unlikely that such affections were exceptional since the author would otherwise not have included such scenes without any further explanations and justifications.

Whereas early medieval sources such as these flow only sparingly about childhood—though they also unabashedly reveal the remarkable emotional bonds between adults and children when the right opportunity emerged—late-medieval authors much more frequently discussed children in their own cultural framework. Both the *Lytylle Childrenes Lytil Boke or Edylllys be* (Harley MS. 541, fol. 210, ca. 1480) and *The Young Children's Book* (Ashmolean MS. 61 [Bodleian Library], ca. 1500) indicate that late-medieval writers habitually addressed the important issue of how and what to teach young children who needed to learn how to perform in public, at court, at dinner table, and, most important, the proper behavior and care

⁸³ *Queenship and Sanctity: The Lives of Mathilda and the Epitaph of Adelheid*. Trans. with an introduction and notes by Sean Gilsdorf. Medieval Texts in Translation (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 110.

⁸⁴ *Queenship and Sanctity*, 115. This scene might be, as Gilsdorf surmises, 52, "the only image in medieval sacred biography of the saint as a doting grandmother."

for oneself during the day.⁸⁵ Many of these teachings pertain to most mundane manners and reveal to us that medieval writers had a clear understanding of the nature and skills of children. In *The Young Children's Book*, for example, we read: "Ne pleye with spone, trenchere, ne knyffe. / Yn honesty & clenys lede þou thi lyffe. / This boke is made for chylde 3onge / At the scowle þat byde not longe" (145–48).⁸⁶ Depending on the textual genre, we find more or less information about children, and general, absolutist statements about the status of children in the Middle Ages can hardly be formulated because much depends on the cultural framework, the historical and geographic period, the religious background, and the philosophical orientation of the chronicler. Not surprisingly, both the history of mentality and the history of everyday life in the age of the Merovingians and the Carolingians, for instance, and hence the history of childhood, continue to be serious desiderata.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, children emerge even in profoundly hagiographical texts, such as in Hrotsvit of Gandersheim's (935–after 973) religious narrative *The Martyrdom of the Holy Virgins Fides, Spes, and Karitas*, or *Sapientia*. Here these three children energetically, almost irascibly oppose the pagan emperor and willingly accept their martyrdom for their faith. As Daniel T. Kline observes, "Christian teaching moves from the mother to her daughters: each daughter comforts the mother; the mother exhorts each child; and finally, each daughter urges the next to remain faithful to the death. These words of fidelity to a mother's teachings extend beyond the dramatic context into the audience at Gandersheim and particularly to the girls of the audience—oblates, novitiate, pupils, and daughters all."⁸⁸ Certainly, Kline also concludes that these children are "expendable" (91), but the emotional bond between mother and children still proves to be fundamental for the religious message of Hrotsvit's narrative.

⁸⁵ *The Babees Book. The Bokes of Nurture of Hugh Rhodes and John Russell*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall. Early English Text Society, o. s., 32 (London: Trübner, 1868), 16–25.

⁸⁶ For further information about this topic, see Karen K. Jambeck's contribution to this volume.

⁸⁷ Martina Hartmann, *Aufbruch ins Mittelalter: Die Zeit der Merowinger* (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 2003), 120–24; the same situation is lamented by John Marshall Carter, *Medieval Games: Sports and Recreation in Feudal Society*. Contributions to the Study of World History, 30 (New York, Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 1992), 25.

⁸⁸ Daniel T. Kline, "Irascible Children in Hrotsvit's *Sapientia*," *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: Contexts, Identities, Affinities, and Performances*, ed. Phyllis R. Brown, Linda A. McMillin, and Katharina M. Wilson (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 77–95; here 91.

The Example of Oswald von Wolkenstein

One late-medieval poet deliberately played on the motif of children in order to reflect upon his own frustration with his (involuntarily) withdrawn life in the Tyrolean Alps. Oswald von Wolkenstein (1376/77–1445) is famous today for his fascinating poetic experiments with poetic autobiography, with apodemic topoi (images of travel throughout the world), highly graphic images of erotic encounters with a country girl—perhaps his own future wife—and innovative literary images of political, economic, military, and religious issues.⁸⁹ In contrast to most other contemporary poets Oswald openly and unhesitatingly reflects upon his own life, feelings, attitudes, and ideas. In his song “Durch Barbarei, Arabia” (Kl 44) Oswald contrasts his past glorious experiences as an international traveler and diplomat with his present personal experiences and realizes to his deep frustration that the grand old days have passed and that he is stuck in his alpine world without many chances of returning to the glamorous stage of international politics. In face of the agricultural world, and frustrated with his boring family situation, he begins to beat up his children: “vor angst slach ich mein kinder” (50).⁹⁰ But whenever he dares to spank his children, their mother comes rushing out of the house and attacks him in turn, reprimanding or even hitting him to protect the children from his violent outburst. As the poet states, rather facetiously and with tongue-in-cheek: “ab irem zoren mir da graust” (Kl 44, 48; I got really scared of her fury).⁹¹ As scholars have recognized many times, most allusions in Oswald’s work to the real world have to be read metaphorically or symbolically, which suggests that also this reference to his own children does not

⁸⁹ Anton Schwob, *Oswald von Wolkenstein*, 3rd ed. Schriftenreihe des Südtiroler Kulturinstitutes, 4 (1977; Bozen: Athesia, 1982); Dirk Joschko, *Oswald von Wolkenstein: Eine Monographie zu Person, Werk und Forschungsgeschichte*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 396 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1985); for an English introduction, see Albrecht Classen, “Oswald von Wolkenstein. (1376/77 – 1445),” *Literary Encyclopedia* (internet; 2004); this new reference work is available online only : <http://www.litencyc.com/php/people.php?rec=true&UID=5559> (last accessed on March 14, 2005).

⁹⁰ *Die Lieder Oswalds von Wolkenstein*. Unter Mitwirkung von Walter Weiß und Notburga Wolf, herausgegeben von Karl Kurt Klein. Musikanhang von Walter Salmen. 3., neubearbeitete und erweiterte Auflage von Hans Moser, Norbert Richard Wolf und Notburga Wolf. Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, 55 (1962; Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1987), cited as Kl 44 (Kl standing for the editor, Klein).

⁹¹ Alan Robertshaw, *Oswald von Wolkenstein: The Myth and the Man*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 178 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1977), 107–08. The problem with his reading is that he tries to excuse Oswald for his tendency toward domestic violence and child abuse, just as Oswald scholarship had done in the first half of the twentieth century, not perceiving the stylization of the effort to spank his children for obviously literary purposes.

necessarily carry autobiographical meaning.⁹² Oswald does not provide any reasons why he intended to beat his children, instead he only emphasizes his deep sense of disappointment with his life and his effort to find a substitution for his failures outside of the family. Violence, in other words, here does not signal to us that the poet truly subscribes to the concept of random and unexplainable violence within the family, although that is what actually happens. However, the father figure does not even have a chance to abuse his children, since the children's mother immediately comes to their rescue. The context clearly indicates that Oswald has no particular concern with the children, nor does he truly find his life on the South Tyrolean castle particularly interesting. Consequently, the spanking of the children proves to be not a message about parents who need to exert their physical authority with violent measures. On the contrary, Oswald plays with a well-known motif and casts himself as the abusive father. The fact by itself that such a literary role existed, and also that the father has to deal with the aggressive mother who quickly takes her children's side and threatens to beat her husband in turn indicates a much more complex relationship between parents and children. In fact, as the poetic context indicates, Oswald cared neither about his peasant neighbors nor about his own children—all of them, however, threaten to restrict his artistic, individual activities, his political freedom, and his public performance. The poet refers to his own children and their spanking as punishment only as a diversion to his own political and cultural failures, and then allows his own wife to speak up, chastising him for his rude behavior: "si spricht: 'swie hastu nu erzaust / die kind zu ainem zelten'" (Kl 44, 26–27; she said: 'how could you beat up the children like a pancake.' Most indicative prove to be the subsequent lines: "ab irem zoren mir da graust, / doch mangeln ich sein selten" (Kl. 44, 28–29; I got really scared of her fury, but I have to go through this experience it quite often), insofar as the poet pretends truly not to care about his children and only includes the reference to his own violent treatment of his children as a comic interlude to emphasize his personal frustration and sense of forlornness.

Insofar as Oswald refers to the spanking of his own children as a condemnable past time, and immediately adds the comic admission of how much he is afraid of his wife's counter-measure, we can conclude that this song does not intend to glorify child abuse, nor does it discuss the gender relationships or family affairs. Nevertheless, insofar as Oswald plays with this motif of physical abuse, he indicates that spanking children does not find common approval and is vehemently opposed by his wife who immediately protects her children against their

⁹² This was convincingly demonstrated once again by Sieglinde Hartmann, "Oswald von Wolkenstein et la Méditerranée: Espace de vie, espace de poésie," *Jahrbuch der Oswald von Wolkenstein Gesellschaft*, 8 (1994/1995): 289–320.

father. Moreover, Oswald reveals that his real issues are not the children, or his wife, but his own personal frustration in the rural world of South Tyrol where the noise of the animals (Kl 44, 32) and the loud rushing of the creek (34) drive him crazy (see also his song Kl 30); the children only serve a poetic function basically always related with the poet himself and his self-presentation.⁹³

Nevertheless, insofar as he incorporates his children and his own harsh behavior toward them in his autobiographical poem, Oswald indicates, at least *e negativo*, that physical abuse of children is condemnable and would not even be approved by himself; otherwise he would not have included the appearance of his wife as their defender.⁹⁴ Oswald as a poetic performer deliberately plays with the projection of himself as an abuser of his own child, and thereby he unintentionally sheds light on the considerable degree to which adults of his time could harbor love for their children and would have disapproved of his violent treatment of his own children only out personal frustration resulting from his political failures: "Mein landesfürst, der ist mir gram / von böser leutte neide" (Kl. 44, 73–74; My Lord is angry with me, misled by evil people's envy of me). This peculiar example indicates, once again, how difficult it is to detect concrete examples of how medieval writers regarded children.

Fortunately, here and elsewhere we observe the same phenomenon which allows us to reach new ground in the exploration of the emotional history of the Middle Ages. Whenever poets address childhood, they do not treat children as mere objects but rather describe them, in a surprisingly modern terms, as lovable creatures, at least when the literary framework allows the protagonist or narrator to inject more intimate observations. Of course, children, just as much as most other figures that emerge in medieval literature, carry a symbolic and allegorical meaning,⁹⁵ and this both in the "Strawberry Song" by the Wilde Alexander and in

⁹³ Elisabeth Lienert, "Bilder von Kindheit bei Oswald von Wolkenstein," *Jahrbuch der Oswald von Wolkenstein Gesellschaft* 9 (1996/1997): 111–20.

⁹⁴ Johannes Grabmayer, *Europa im späten Mittelalter*, 119–21.

⁹⁵ Lienert, "Bilder," 120, would be correct in her conclusion: "Selbstzweck ist Kindheitsschilderung in deutschen literarischen Texten des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit also nie; Kindheitsdarstellung ist vielmehr entschieden funktional" (children are never portrayed in medieval and early-modern German literary texts just for their own sake: children's portraits are, on the contrary, definitely functional). Nevertheless, from the perspective of mental history, we still can detect specific information about medieval attitudes regarding children even in allegorical texts, such as in Der Wilde Alexander's so-called "Strawberry Song," "Hie vor do wir kinder wâren" (V), where human history in its religious-ethical dimensions is cast in the images of childhood which is a sudden transformation into puberty and early adulthood after one of the children has been bitten by a snake. Quoted from: *Deutsche Litterdichter des 13. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Carl von Kraus. Vol. I: Text. 2nd ed., rev. by Gisela Kornrumpf (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1978), 12–13. In order to convey a religious teaching, the Wilde Alexander draws from the concept of childhood and unmistakably

Oswald von Wolkenstein's nostalgic song Kl. 44 "Durch Barbarei, Arabia." Nevertheless, the fact of their appearance all by itself, and the observation that these children are portrayed as children, confirm that childhood was an considered an important stage in human development and hence appreciated in its own terms.

Further Perspectives

As Charles de La Roncière now points out, late-medieval writers expressed their ardent sentiments for their children and other family members in letters and in a variety of literary texts, which finds powerful confirmation in a wide range of visual documentation from the same time period. "Affection between husband and wife was communicated to the children. It reinforced and rejuvenated the bonds that held the extended family together; even friends were included in its warmth."⁹⁶ Many late-medieval Italian writers highlighted the intense relationship between parents and children, but also between husbands and wives: "Despite quarrels and disagreements, the family remained the prime breeding ground of an affection that extended to friends and relatives alike and was active and productive, the cornerstone of private solidarity."⁹⁷ Obviously, Oswald knew how to entertain his audience when he introduced himself as a violent father, undoubtedly provoking his listeners to protest and yet to laugh at this satirical self-portrait, especially because spanking children as an educational tool was regarded as normative throughout the Middle Ages and up to the twentieth century. On the other hand, when parents lost their children, either through kidnapping or through a fatal accident, their grief was profound, often leading to

reflects children in their typical activities and innocent attitude toward the world: "dô schein unser kintlich schin" (2, 6: there our childish behavior became noticeable).

⁹⁶ Charles de La Roncière, "Tuscan Notables on the Eve of the Renaissance," *Revelations of the Medieval World*, ed. Georges Duby, trans. Arthur Goldhammer. *A History of Private Life*, II (1985; Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1988), 157–310; here 275. Surprisingly, de La Roncière discusses these aspects without any recourse to the large debate about childhood initiated by Aries, but this is typical of the entire volume dedicated to private life in the Middle Ages insofar as there is no discussion about the theoretical underpinnings of the entire approach to privacy and personal life.

⁹⁷ Charles de La Roncière, "Tuscan Notables," 276; we observe the same naïvete and lack of contextualization, not to speak of theoretical explorations concerning the issues at stake, in the subsequent article by Danielle Regnier-Bohler, "Imagining the Self," *ibid.*, 311–94, who briefly mentions King Mark's deeply felt love for his nephew Tristan in Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan* as evidence for highly affectionate relationships between adults and the children in their intimate and wider family, 338.

absolute desperation, such as in the anonymous *Guillaume de Palerne* (ca. 1300). After the werewolf has kidnapped four-year old Guillaume, "The queen is grieving so much / That to be dead would be her desire; / She weeps frequently and cries out and wails. / She describes her son with the beast: / 'Son, sweet beloved,' says the queen, / With your tender, rose-colored mouth, / Divine, celestial creature, / Who would have believed that a beast or wolf / Would devour you? God, what luck! / Woe is me! Why am I alive? Why do I outlast him?"⁹⁸

These general observations need to be extensively nuanced and critically examined, taking into account considerable differences between various periods and cultures, social classes, and also the media in which childhood was reflected.⁹⁹ Both theological and art-historical sources need to be considered in this effort to reassess and perhaps also to revise the paradigm as established by Ariès. One example among many has to suffice here. In the polyptych by Simon Bening from 1530, Bruges, for example, Jesus's birth, his early life as an infant, Mary's and Joseph's careful tending to their child, and his loving treatment by other adults find explicit representation (Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery; W.442A).¹⁰⁰ The many books of hours, widely disseminated especially since the fifteenth century, offer numerous examples of children, either in the margins or, at times, even in the center of the images. As Bridget Ann Henisch emphasizes, however, the artists did not pay particular attention to children, instead they mostly happened to incorporate them, as it seems, in their drawings because of iconographic convenience, such as when a specific mood or environment was to be depicted where children normally can be found.¹⁰¹ Ronald G. Kecks's comparative analysis of images with the Madonna and her baby in Trecento Italian art indicates a growing interest in the intimate relationship between mother and child: "Dabei wird die Distanz von der bilddominierenden Gestalt des göttlichen Kindes zur Madonna zunächst so verändert, daß der Christusknabe in seinem Aussehen und Verhalten einem wirklichen Kinde angenähert wurde, was wiederum notwendig machte, daß die Madonna nun als Mutter auf ihn reagiert" (In this process the distance of the dominant figure of the divine child to the Madonna is changed in

⁹⁸ *Guillaume de Palerne: An English Translation of the 12th Century French Verse Romance*, trans. and ed. Leslie A. Sconduto (Jefferson, NC, and London: McFarland, 2004), vv. 125–34.

⁹⁹ Mathias Beer, *Eltern und Kinder des späten Mittelalters*, 28: "Die entscheidende Frage lautet also nicht, ob es Liebe in den Beziehungen gegeben hat oder nicht, sondern wie, in welcher Form sie sich zu einer bestimmten Zeit und in einer bestimmten sozialen Schicht geäußert hat." (The decisive question therefore would not be whether there was love in those relationships, but in which form it was manifested, at what specific times, and in what specific social classes).

¹⁰⁰ Maurits Smeyers, *Flemish Miniatures from the 8th to the mid-16th Century: The Medieval World on Parchment* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Davidsfonds, 1999), ch. 8, 431, plate 17.

¹⁰¹ Bridget Ann Henisch, *The Medieval Calendar Year* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 158–59.

such a way that in his appearance and behavior the Christ child is increasingly made to look like a real child. This in turn necessitated that the Madonna now react to him as a mother.¹⁰² This development intensified in the fifteenth century when altarpieces depicting the Madonna and her child created for private devotion increasingly focused on the emotional and spiritual relationship between the two. The artists selected themes such as the babe hugging his mother,¹⁰³ the Madonna tickling the child, the baby playing with his mother's arm, or snuggling at his mother's neck. A number of times we can even observe the child seeking protection, pressing its body to the Madonna, clearly expressing fear of some threat.¹⁰⁴ Keck praises the Quattrocento Florentine artists above all for their considerable psychological insights in the fundamental emotional relationship between mother and child, as documented, for instance, by Luca della Robbia's Madonna sculptures and Michelozzo's Madonna relief in the Bargello.¹⁰⁵ Insofar as children emerge under such circumstances, almost by accident, the artists demonstrate, quite involuntarily, how much childhood was indeed a major aspect of daily life and deserved to be incorporated in paintings large and small. Aurelio Luini (1530–1593), for example, shows a remarkable scene of mothers and children in the painting *Arrival of the Animals in the Ark* (central wall, Capella dell'Arca di Noè, San Maurizio al Monastero Maggiore, Milan), clearly suggesting how much these mothers cared for their babies and toddlers.¹⁰⁶ In the painting depicting *The Flood*, Aurelio Luini even includes a little crib with a baby wrapped into swaddling clothes floating on the waters.¹⁰⁷ The same applies to the numerous hagiographical texts where saints intervene in the lives of families to rescue children. Clarissa W. Atkinson emphasizes, for instance, "The insecurity and real

¹⁰² Ronald G. Kecks, *Madonna und Kind: Das häusliche Andachtsbild im Florenz des 15. Jahrhunderts*. Frankfurter Forschungen zur Kunst, 15 (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1988), 53. Significantly, contrary to older opinions, many medieval artists did not shy away from depicting the pregnant Madonna, signaling that even this biological stage prior to Christ's parturition was observed with great interest; see Gregor Martin Lechner OSB, *Maria Gravida: Zum Schwangerschaftsmotiv in der bildenden Kunst*. Münchner Kunsthistorische Abhandlungen, IX (Munich and Zürich: Schnell & Steiner, 1981).

¹⁰³ A wonderful example would be Bernardino Luini's "Madonna and Child," before 1532, Warsaw National Museum; for further examples by Luini (ca. 1480–1532), see *Sacro e profano nella pittura di Bernardino Luini*, a cura di Piero Chiara, Gian Alberto Dell'Acqua, et al. (Luino: Civico istituto di cultura popolare, 1975), nos. 109, 113, 114, 115.

¹⁰⁴ For illustrations, see Kecks, *Madonna und Kind*, plates 34–73. Most moving seems to be a Florentine artist's sculpture of the Christ child meditatively leaning at the Madonna's chest, plate 54.

¹⁰⁵ Kecks, *Madonna und Kind*, 57.

¹⁰⁶ Bernardino Luini and Renaissance Painting in Milan. *The Frescoes of San Maurizio al Monastero Maggiore*, ed. by Sandrina Bandera and Maria Teresa Fiorio (Milan: Skira, 2000), 265, no. 35a.

¹⁰⁷ Bernardino Luini, 269, no. 35b.

dangers of medieval childhood created powerful, persistent fantasies of protection and rescue by an omnipotent, loving mother."¹⁰⁸

As we learn from Klaus Arnold, since the twelfth century Anselm of Canterbury and Bernard of Clairvaux strongly encouraged their audiences to venerate the Virgin Mary and the Jesus child.¹⁰⁹ In fact, Christ's childhood also greatly gained interest for literary authors, such as Konrad of Fussesbrunnen who composed his *Die Kindheit Jesu* around 1200 and included astoundingly intimate images of the Christ child at the bosom of his mother, the Virgin Mary, playing in the bath tub, and of the mother kissing her child: "si chuste dicker denne zwir / des süezen chindelines munt" (1902–03; she kissed many times [more than twice] the lips of the sweet child).¹¹⁰ Once Jesus has reached the age when he likes to play with other children, he seeks their company: "wan des enbetragt in nie; / ouch was er gerne bi in" (2666–67; he always enjoyed doing that and he was happy to be with them). By the same token, Mary is described as a loving mother who strongly cares for her child: "Nu si ze velde chomen sint, / diu frouwe sach ir liebez chint / dà wider unt fur gèn / unt bî sinen vînden stên. / minneclich si in an sach, / ein teil si blœdeclichen sprach" (2791–96; when they came to the field, the woman saw how her dear child went forth and stood next to his enemies. Lovingly she looked at him and said, somewhat filled with fear). Although the narrator clearly identifies Jesus as the future savior, vested with divine power, he makes every effort to portray him as a young person in his childlike state: "Des andern morgens er quam / mit den chinden, dà man letten gruop. / ein niuwez spil er aber huop" (2910–12; the other morning he arrived together with the children at the site where they dug out clay. He began with a new game). Insofar as Konrad subtly identified the Holy Family as belonging to the aristocracy, he also made the image of Jesus as a child particularly appealing to an aristocratic audience.¹¹¹ As Mary Martin McLaughlin observes with respect to Bernard of Clairvaux, he was the first one to inspire new devotion to the Infant Jesus: "in his sermons and other works he offered his contemporaries a new image of the Child in His human weakness, His

¹⁰⁸ Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation*, 137; see also *Medieval Mothering*, ed. John Carmi Parson and Bonnie Wheeler.

¹⁰⁹ Klaus Arnold, *Kind und Gesellschaft in Mittelalter und Renaissance: Beiträge und Texte zur Geschichte der Kindheit*. Sammlung Zebra, Reihe B, 2 (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1980), 60.

¹¹⁰ Konrad von Fussesbrunne, *Die Kindheit Jesu*. Kritische Ausgabe von Hans Fromm und Klaus Grubmüller (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1973).

¹¹¹ Norbert Vorwinden, "Die Heilige Familie in einigen Leben-Jesu-Dichtungen des 13. Jahrhunderts. Zum intendierten Publikum im deutschen und niederländischen Sprachraum," *Qeeste jaargang* 4, 1 (1997): 27–41.

'tears and crying,' and urged them to be converted to that little Child so that they might learn 'to be a little child.'¹¹²

The thirteenth-century Franciscan *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, composed by an anonymous author, strongly encouraged its audience "to empathize with sacred figures through a series of spiritual exercises designed to focus attention on the emotions and sensations associated with holy narratives."¹¹³ For instance, when Jesus stays behind in Jerusalem unbeknownst to his parents, Mary almost loses her mind worrying about her lost son: "That evening, wishing to go from house to house as opportunely as possible, she looked for Him . . . And she was in pain from sorrow and ardor. Crying the old Joseph followed her. But they found nothing, and you yourself can imagine that they had no peace, especially the mother, who loved Him most intimately. . . . Watch her and pity her deeply, for her spirit is anguished as never before since she was born."¹¹⁴ For many religiously inspired women this meant that they were invited to imitate the maternal role of the Virgin Mary, with all the mundane tasks involved in the care of babies, such as breast-feeding, swaddling, and entertaining the child.¹¹⁵ One powerful example in medieval German literature can be found in Frau Ava's *Leben Jesu* where Mary approaches her son, when she finally discovers him in the temple, first with an expression of profound love, and only then with some reproaches.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Martin McLaughlin, "Survivors and Surrogates," 133; see also Marzena Gorecka, *Das Bild Mariens in der deutschen Mystik des Mittelalters*. Deutsche Literatur von den Anfängen bis 1700, 29 (Bern, Berlin, et al.: Peter Lang, 1999), 299–334.

¹¹³ Geraldine A. Johnson, "Beautiful Brides and Model Mothers: The Devotional and Talismanic Functions of Early Modern Marian Reliefs," *The Material Culture of Sex, Procreation, and Marriage in Premodern Europe*, ed. Anne L. McClanan and Karen Rosoff Encarnación (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 135–61, here 138; Kurt Ruh, *Geschichte der abendländischen Mystik*. Vol. 2: *Frauenmystik und Franziskanische Mystik der Frühzeit* (Munich: Beck, 1993), 439–441; Isa Ragusa und Rosalie B. Green, eds., *Meditations on the Life of Christ: An Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*. (Princeton Monographs in Art and Archeology, 35 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961); Rosemary Hale, "Imitatio Mariae: Motherhood Motifs in Devotional Memoirs," *Medieval German Literature. Proceedings from the 23rd International Congress on Medieval Studies Kalamazoo, Michigan, May 5–8, 1988*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 507 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1989), 129–145.

¹¹⁴ *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, 87–88.

¹¹⁵ Rosemary Drage Hale, "Imitatio Mariae: Motherhood Motifs in Late Medieval German Spirituality." Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge, MA, 1992, 55; eadem, "Imitatio Mariae," eadem, *Understanding Christianity: Origins, Beliefs, Practices, Holy Texts, Sacred Places* (London: Duncan Baird, 2004); see also Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

¹¹⁶ For a detailed analysis of this scene, see the intriguing study on Frau Ava by Eva Parra Membrives, in this volume. For an English translation of Frau Ava's text, see *Ava's New Testament Narratives: "When the Old Law Passed Away"*. Introduction, Translation, and Notes by James A. Rushing, Jr.

Art, Archeology, and Related Disciplines

Whether for purely religious purposes or for other reasons, the ubiquitous imagery of the mother and her child in the most intimate embrace became a standard icon of late-medieval art and literature, which clearly signals to us the strong emphasis on the emotional bond between both persons.¹¹⁷ Some of the best examples can be found in fourteenth-century psalters produced in the Benedictine women's convent of Engelberg, Switzerland, where intimate scenes of the Virgin Mary giving Jesus a bath, suckling him, or of scenes of Jesus playing at Mary's feet, demonstrate the great value placed on the emotional bond between mother and child within this religious context.¹¹⁸ Scholarship of mysticism and piety has primarily interpreted the motherhood imagery as symbolism urging the believer to accept the motherly embrace of Christ personally, whose blood which he shed for mankind was identified with the milk of a nursing mother.¹¹⁹ We can now also argue that here subtle yet explicit references to highly affective relationships between parents and children are reflected; otherwise the theologians and mystic would not have projected this endearing tableau of motherhood.¹²⁰

Contrary to Ariès's claim, art historical documents have also provided important insights into the evaluation of emotional links between parents and children. But here, just as in medieval literature, we have to pay close attention to details and marginal drawings insofar as children as motifs gained in interest only with the fourteenth and fifteenth century.¹²¹ As John E. Keller and Annette Grant Cash demonstrate, late-medieval manuscript illustrations with religious themes, such as the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, provided many opportunities to depict children who were rescued, supported, and showered with love by the Virgin Mary. This observation finds many confirmations in contemporary manuscripts all over

Medieval German Texts in Bilingual Editions (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2003), 77.

¹¹⁷ *Sanctity and Motherhood: Essays on Holy Mothers in the Middle Ages*, ed. Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker. Garland Medieval Casebook (New York and London: Garland, 1995); *Medieval Mothering*, ed. John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler.

¹¹⁸ Susan Marti, *Malen, Schreiben und Beten: Die spätmittelalterliche Handschriftenproduktion im Doppelkloster Engelberg* (Zurich: Zurich InterPublisher, 2002), 207–10.

¹¹⁹ Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1982), 132–33.

¹²⁰ Pierre Riche and Daniele Alexandre-Bidon, "L'enfant au moyen âge: état de la question," *La petite enfance dans l'Europe médiévale et moderne*, ed. Robert Fossier (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1997), 7–29; here 12–13.

¹²¹ Arnold, *Kind und Gesellschaft*, 64.

Europe.¹²² Nevertheless, since the vast majority of medieval paintings with religious themes focus on Christ's Passion, on saints' adult lives, and on the spiritual revelation of the Godhead in its myriad manifestations, childhood and emotional relationship between parents and their children at first sight might seem simply inappropriate until we consider Mary's extraordinary pain over her son's extreme physical suffering.¹²³ In this context, childhood and emotional relationship between parents and their children at first sight might seem simply inappropriate, unless we consider Mary's extraordinary pain over her son's extreme physical suffering.

In order to find children in medieval art, our own focus has to shift toward those illustrations or sculptures that utilized scenes from daily life both at home and on the farm, both in the market and in the workshop, both on a frozen river and in the pasture. There, suddenly, children play a significant role because they allowed the artists to introduce softer and more mundane elements that served primarily for the viewer's entertainment, such as the image of a "boy with bat and ball, in the margin of the thirteenth-century Saint Blasien Psalter. . . ."¹²⁴

Even archeology has come to our aid uncovering large numbers of children's toys found in graves, both in sixth-century Gaul and tenth-century Iceland,¹²⁵ to mention just two outlying regions. Moreover, as Klaus Arnold reminds us, children can always be found in medieval visual, textual, and material sources, whether they were treated with respect or more sternly and coldly. Entirely depending on the thematic focus, children were discussed in great detail—especially among the thirteenth-century encyclopedic writers, such as Bartholomew Anglicus in his *De rerum proprietatibus* (6, 4–9)—or only in passing, such as by theologians and judicial writers. In Arnold's words, "Zwischen 1100 und 1300 scheint sich verstärkt die Anschauung durchzusetzen, daß das Kind ein Wesen mit eigenen Rechten und Möglichkeiten ist" (86; Between 1100 and 1300 people began to realize that the child is a human creature with its own rights and possibilities). Most intriguingly, particularly archeology has been in the forefront of recovering the history of childhood in the Middle Ages, demonstrating with the findings in graves, covered-up dungheaps, and old sewers that children were dressed as children, had typical toys, and enjoyed their own furniture and

¹²² John E. Keller and Annette Grant Cash, *Daily Life Depicted in the Cantigas de Santa Maria*. Studies in Romance Languages, 44 (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 60–61.

¹²³ See Parra Membrives's contribution to this volume.

¹²⁴ Henisch, *The Medieval Calendar*, 141.

¹²⁵ Arnold, *Kind und Gesellschaft*, 69.

household items appropriate for their age.¹²⁶ According to Cécile Treffort, since the ninth century children were suddenly incorporated into the Christian cemeteries and treated with as much spiritual respect as the adults. In other words, whereas before children were only part of the extended family, still in the Roman sense of *familia*, with the growing impact of the Christian church they gained in importance and received the full attention both by the authorities and their parents.¹²⁷ Early-medieval Frankish tombstones explicitly confirm that parents mournfully remembered their deceased children and left moving memorials for them. Some of the most remarkable examples come from the areas of Trier, Cologne, and surrounding areas.¹²⁸

Whenever historians have turned their attention to a wide range of sources and materials, they could demonstrate that Ariès's arguments had to be refuted. Dorota Zoląda-Strzelcyk, for instance, found enough evidence in the history of premodern Poland to confirm that the child in its many developmental stages had always been highly present in people's minds long before the eighteenth century. In her *Dziecko w dawnej*, she discusses pregnancy and delivery, baptism, the life of the toddler, children's diet, toys, the education of children, dangers for children, and other aspects, relying both on written sources and archeological findings, paintings, and literary-didactic texts.¹²⁹

Recently, Nicholas Orme has offered one of the most comprehensive studies of medieval childhood, focusing on the family life, dangers for children while growing up, children's nursery rhymes, children's play, the role of the child within the Church, children's education, and their growing up. In direct opposition to older scholarship which had been deeply influenced by the

¹²⁶ See also the catalogue to the exhibition, *L, enfance au moyen âge*, ed. Pierre Riche and Daniele Alexandre-Bidon (Paris: Seuil, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 1994); for a detailed review of French scholarship, see Pierre Riche and Daniele Alexandre-Bidon, "L'enfant au moyen âge," 15–20.

¹²⁷ Cécile Treffort, "Archeologie funéraire et histoire de la petite enfance: Quelques remarques à propos du haut moyen âge," *La petite enfance dans l'Europe médiévale et moderne*, 93–107; here 107: "L'intégration des enfants (en tant que fideles privilegies) à l'espace des morts est également le signe d'une appartenance à un nouveau groupe social en cours de constitution."

¹²⁸ *Die Franken: Wegbereiter Europas. 5. bis 8. Jahrhundert. Katalog-Handbuch in zwei Teilen*, ed. Alfred Wiechzorek, Patrick Perin, Karin von Welck, and Wilfried Menghin. 2nd ed. (1996; Mainz: Verlag P. von Zabern, 1997), 2, 606; Catalogue IV.2, 15 and 17. I thank Björn Kley, Berlin, for pointing out this reference.

¹²⁹ Dorota Zoląda-Strzelcyk, *Dziecko w dawnej Polsce* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2002). Trans.: *The Child in Old Poland*. I thank the author for alerting me to her study and for providing me with some basic translations. See also her "The Upbringing of Children in the Light of Old Polish Pedagogical Theory," *Acta Poloniae Historica* 79 (1999): 23–36. Another important contribution to the history of childhood in medieval Poland is Małgorzata Delimata's *Dziecko w Polsce Średniowiecznej* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2004).

paradigm established by Ariès, Orme alerts us to a common phenomenon in modern thinking about the past. Ariès was so successful with his theses, Orme argues, because they “mirror the popular assumptions . . . to set a boundary between ‘medieval’ and ‘modern’ times.”¹³⁰ By contrast, as Orme now observes, “Medieval people, especially (but not only) after the twelfth century, had concepts of what childhood was, and when it began and ended” (5). Whereas Orme does not provide earth-shaking new evidence about medieval childhood, the breadth and variety of evidence he locates in didactic texts, church records, scientific literature, manuscript illustrations, chronicles, and poems strongly support the new paradigm which confirms that children were well regarded in the Middle Ages and fully recognized as children, that is, not as young adults.¹³¹ This does not mean that all people expressed the same enthusiasm for and love of children, and many authors reflected upon childhood in a very unsentimental fashion, outlining in detail what they thought children needed to learn, how they had to behave, what they would have to eat, and how they had to obey their parents.¹³²

Psycho-Historical Investigations

Didactic books about children published today would not necessarily differ very much from their medieval counterparts,¹³³ and we just have to take into account different interests, concerns, and motifs that determine all those various sources relevant for childhood both in the past and today.¹³⁴ Obviously, the further we go back in history, the less we hear or learn about children, but “Fewer people could write, and their reasons for writing had less to do with children. When it was relevant to them, in coroners’ records or accounts of miracles, adults did so with the same care and consistency that they gave to themselves.”¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 5.

¹³¹ For a positive review, see Albrecht Classen, *Mediaevistik* 15 (2002): 192–94; for a surprisingly negative, perhaps somewhat one-sided review, see James A. Schultz, *Mediaevalia et Humanistica* 30 (2004): 156–59. Cf. also Joel T. Rosenthal, in *Journal of Social History* (2003), Spring; here I have used the internet version at: http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2005/is_3_36/ai_99699507 (last accessed on March 14, 2005).

¹³² See, for example, the didactic verse treatise by Thomasin von Zerclaere, *Der welsche Gast*. Vol. 1: *Einleitung, Überlieferung, Text, die Varianten des Prosa-vorworts*, ed. F. W. von Kries. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 425/I (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1984), Book One, 755–1790; for many different references to children’s didactic literature, see Orme, *Medieval Children*, 242–46, et passim.

¹³³ See Nicole Clifton’s contribution to this volume.

¹³⁴ For new insights on didactic books for children in the Middle Ages, see the contributions by Nicole Clifton and Karen K. Jambeck in this volume.

¹³⁵ Orme, *Medieval Children*, 9.

Some scholars have even taken the next step and are trying to reconstruct a psychological history of premodern childhood, but neither the theoretical framework nor the textual or material evidence easily lends itself to such an enterprise.¹³⁶ Altogether, however, we would be justified to claim that the paradigm shift is about to happen since a critical mass of relevant data has been accumulated. Many chronicle accounts are now studied in light of quite different questions, such as those pertaining to the history of emotions concerning the relationship between parents and children. For instance, two Arabic chroniclers and Jean de Joinville, all reflecting upon the abduction of a three-month old baby from the Christian camp in Acre in May of 1191, consistently report on the dramatic scene when Sultan Saladin ordered the return of the baby. Both parents are said to have shed tears of joy when they saw their child again, and expressed their deep gratitude to Saladin.¹³⁷

One final example would be the anonymous thirteenth-century courtly romance *Wigamur*, closely modeled after Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*. Again, the narrative follows the young man's personal development throughout his life, while searching for his name and hence his identity. Interesting for us, however, is the early stage of his knighthood as he appears in public without knowing much about the world of the adults at all, making a fool of himself, which significantly adds to the comic element. For our purposes, neither the source material nor the actual message of the text matters, whereas the presentation of the very young hero sheds significant light on the general question we are dealing with. The protagonist is, in surprising parallel to the narrative strategy in the various *Lancelot* romances,¹³⁸ kidnapped by a wild woman, Lespia, and taken into her kingdom under the water of a lake. The narrator emphasizes, first, that this caused the father great sorrow ("groß laidt," 113), and that the prince was really only a little boy

¹³⁶ Dorle Klika, "Methodische Zugänge zur historischen Kindheitsforschung," *Handbuch qualitativer Forschungsmethoden in der Erziehungswissenschaft*, ed. Barbara Friebertshäuser and Annedore Prengel (Weinheim and Munich: Juventa, 1997), 298–308; here 298; Edmund Hermesen, "Aries' 'Geschichte der Kindheit' in ihrer mentalitätsgeschichtlichen und psychohistorischen Problematik," *Psychogenetische Geschichte der Kindheit: Beiträge zur Psychohistorie der Eltern-Kind-Beziehung*, ed. Friedhelm Nyssen and Ludwig Janus (Gießen: Psychosozial-Verlag, 1997), 127–58; Ralph Frenken, *Kindheit und Autobiographie vom 14. bis 17. Jahrhundert: Psychohistorische Rekonstruktionen*. 2 vols. *Psychohistorische Forschungen*, 1/1–2 (Kiel: Oetker Verlag, 1999). All three German scholars, in their effort to deal critically with Aries, offer valuable theoretical observations, but they also create a number of new problems because of their excessive reliance on psychological concepts and do not seem to be as familiar with their medieval sources and the relevant contexts as necessary for their specific approaches.

¹³⁷ Sabine Geldsetzer, *Frauen auf Kreuzzügen: 1096–1291* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2003), 167–68.

¹³⁸ See the contribution by Carol Dover in this volume.

("kindlein," 130).¹³⁹ One day, however, the king captures the wild woman again and threatens her with execution, which indicates how much he had been hurt by the loss of his child (240–49). Nevertheless, he offers to give back her freedom if she returns his son. Unfortunately, in the meantime another monster that she had captured had freed itself and killed the wild woman's two daughters, yet kept the prince alive and abducted him down into the deep sea. When the wild woman witnesses her dead children, she is gripped by so much grief ("sie begund luoen als ain rind," 323) that she lifts up a rock and slays herself (326–28). Although her death is gruesome, it forces us to accept that mothers—here the wild woman—felt as deeply for their children, especially when they suffered death, as modern mothers would.¹⁴⁰ Wigamur, on the other hand, is raised by the other monster who introduces him into the basic chivalric skills, before he is allowed to return home into the world of people, although he has no social skills and truly does not understand anything about the courtly existence, emblematically illustrated through his armor, a bow and arrows (414). When Wigamur arrives at a castle, he observes an army in full siege, leading to a conquest and the slaughter of all those inside. The young man, who veritably acts just like a child, comments to himself that if these are truly people, "so können sy ain schones spil; / doch wän ich, es vil wee tuot" (508–09; they consider it a nice game, but I think that it hurts badly). Although Wigamur seems to be beyond teenage years in his bodily appearance, his mind and manners are those of a child who does not understand the gruesome reality around him: "er mainte, das sy all tag teglich / dise ding tryben ta" (515–16; he thought that they did such things every day). In close parallel to Parzival's stepping onto the stage of chivalry as a naive and inexperienced young man in Wolfram's eponymous romance, *Wigamur* offers comical perspectives of the "kindisch man" (552, childish man) who does not know anything about knightly trappings and acts most foolishly when he defends himself against the knight

¹³⁹ *Wigamur*, ed. avec introduction et index par Danielle Buschinger. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 320 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1987); for a critical reading of the comic elements in this text, see Albrecht Classen, "Der unfreiwillig komische Held Wigamur. Strukturelle und thematische Untersuchungen zu einem spätmittelalterlichen Artus-Roman," *Euphorion* 87, 2/3 (1993): 200–224; for sources, see David Blamires, "The Sources and Literary Structure of *Wigamur*," W. Rothwell, W. R. J. Barron, David Blamires, Lewis Thorpe, T. B. W. Reid, *Studies in Medieval Literature and Languages in Memory of Frederick Whitehead* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1973), 27–46.

¹⁴⁰ This wild woman expresses as much maternal love for her children as Grendel's mother in *Beowulf*; see Keith P. Taylor, "Beowulf 1259a: The Inherent Nobility of Grendel's Mother," *English Language Notes* 31, 3 (1994): 13–25; for motherhood in general, see Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation* (she also refers to Grendel's mother, 82). Carol Dover, in her contribution to this volume, discusses a very similar literary account of a child growing up with a (foster) mother, in the Old French prose *Lancelot*.

Glakotelesfloyr.¹⁴¹ After Wigamur has defeated him, he complains—again revealing his absolute naivete—“du hast mir vil we getan” (660; you hurt me mightily). And once his opponent has promised him his service in return for sparing his life (“und wil werden dein man,” 675; I want to become your man), Wigamur expresses his astonishment about the seemingly sexual implication: “das du wildt mein man sein / und ich ain weyb nit entpin” (683–84; that you want to be my man although I am not a woman). Glakoteslesfloyr’s laughter about this child in a man’s body (687–92) invites the audience to laugh with him because of the discrepancy between adulthood and childhood. Emblematically, at a later point Wigamur wants his horse to lower itself so that his new young female companion can climb on its back. Using brute force, he simply presses the horse down and mishandles it just as a child would mistreat a toy that does not perform as it should (1001–09). Eventually, this young protagonist grows up into a responsible member of courtly society, but in the early stages of the narrative, he has a hard time shedding his childishness, especially when he is asked about his origin, his goals, and intentions, and does not know how to answer any of these questions by his host Yttra (1268–78).¹⁴²

In the narrow sense of the word, Wigamur is not a child, but since he is portrayed as a childish person who does not easily comprehend what the adult world is all about, the narrator provides us a glimpse into thirteenth-century mentality regarding the relationship between adults and children. If Wigamur were not as old as he seems to be, judging by his physical development, his nonsensical statements, laughable behavior, and ignorance even of the most basic aspects of chivalric society, he would indeed serve as an ideal model of how people in the thirteenth century regarded children: they talk silly, they act without reason, and they behave without understanding the basic norms and rules of the adult world. Insofar as the narrative framework invites us to feel bemused by Wigamur’s childishness, the stage of childhood itself gains in respect as a clearly separate period in life. Wigamur does not comprehend the meaning of death—even in face of mass slaughter, he does not show any feelings and seems to be ignorant of what has really happened to those who had been killed—he does

¹⁴¹ For the projection of childhood in Wolfram’s *Parzival*, see Dennis H. Green, “The Young Parzival: Naming and Anonymity,” *Interpretation und Edition deutscher Texte des Mittelalters: Festschrift für John Asher zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Kathryn Smits, Werner Besch, and Victor Lange (Berlin: Schmidt; 1981), 103–118.

¹⁴² Matthias Meyer, “Intertextuality in the Later Thirteenth Century: Wigamur, Gauriel, Lohengrin and the Fragments of Arthurian Romances,” *The Arthur of the Germans: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval German and Dutch Literature*, ed. W. H. Jackson and S. A. Ranawake. *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, 3 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 98–114, offers a good summary of the text, but does not comment on Wigamur’s acting the role of a child.

not know how to sit on a horse, he is ignorant of how to arm himself, and he knows nothing about his own identity. It would be inappropriate to conclude that medieval writers generally disregarded children as foolish and nescient, but the comic descriptions strongly suggest that the author intended to create comic through the deliberate contrast between adults and a childish person.

Wigamur nicely illustrates the intricate nature of our search for how people viewed childhood in the premodern age. Similar to the many textual and visual illustrations of the Jesus child, or of many saints in their childhood, the author was obviously not interested in providing detailed information about that early stage in human development. Nevertheless, since the contrast between adulthood and childhood proved to be so entertaining, at least within the context of Arthurian knighthood and chivalry, the poet offers valuable evidence about how people in the thirteenth century perceived children in their individuality, personality, and emotional maturity.¹⁴³

Whereas the anonymous author of *Wigamur* invites his audience to laugh about the foolish child in a man's body, the religious poet Frau Ava, ca. hundred years earlier, indicated how much children were loved by their parents, and how much their death caused heart-felt pain for them. Briefly commenting about herself at the end of her apocalyptic poem *The Last Judgment* (before 1127): "Dizze buoch dihtote / zweier chinde muoter. / diu sageten ir disen sin, / michel mandunge was under in. / der muoter waren diu chint liep, / der eine von der werlt sciet" (35, 1–6; This book was written / by the mother of two children. / They told her this meaning. / There was much blessed joy among them. / The children were dear to the mother. / One of them left this world).¹⁴⁴

A most remarkable example of medieval awareness of childhood and children's psychology can be found in the thirteenth-century courtly romance *Mai und Beafloer*, closely modeled after the pan-European motif of the "innocently accused queen," such as Gautier de Coinci's *Empress of Rome*, Philippe de Remi's *La*

¹⁴³ Surprisingly, James A. Schultz, *The Knowledge of Childhood*, 220, mentions *Wigamur* only in passing, here reflecting only on its direct dependency on Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*. In other words, when we search for children in medieval literature, we not only have to find new documents or new texts, but we also ought to reread those texts that have been combed through many times before, but then without the specific aspect of childhood in mind.

¹⁴⁴ *Ava's New Testament Narratives*. See also the excellent analysis of this text by Eva Parra Membrives in her contribution to this volume, "Mutterliebe aus weiblicher Perspektive: Zur Bedeutung von Affektivität in Frau Avas *Leben Jesu*." For a brief introduction and overview, see Albrecht Classen, "Ava, Frau," *Women in the Middle Ages: An Encyclopedia*. Vol. I, ed. Katharina M. Wilson and Nadia Margolis (Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 2004), 49–52.

Manekine, or Gower's *Confessio Amantis*.¹⁴⁵ When Mai laments the assumed death of his wife Beafloer, he sings a song of praise of her beauty, virtues, and innocence. He emphasizes, above all, her youth, which seems to make her murder even more heinous. Although Beafloer had delivered a child, Mai still describes her as such a young woman that she could have been delighted with the simple gift of dolls: "dû wære noch in der jugende, / daz man dich mit den tocken / billîch noch solde locken" (7030–32; you were so young that it would have been appropriate to delight you with dolls).¹⁴⁶ In other words, the male protagonist is aware that girls enjoy playing with dolls, and the author has Mai state this observation in order to emphasize Beafloer's youthful charm and childlike appearance, almost equating her with an angel. In fact, as we know from an earlier passage, when Beafloer had arrived in Greece on her flight from her father, the Emperor of Rome, who had tried to rape her, she had hardly developed into a young woman. Mai's mother secretly observes the girl when she is given a bath, and remarks: "'ach, dû bist ein kint' / sprach si, 'wan dir nû erste sint / entsprungen dinu brüstelîn" (2381–83; col. 61, 11–13; "oh," she said, you are only a child since your breasts have hardly developed). The entire emotional development of this romance relies on the premise that children are innocent and must be protected from the evils of this world; hence Beafloer's childlike appearance intensifies the horror about the various attempts either to rape her or to have her killed evoke in the audience.¹⁴⁷

In other words, wherever we look, medieval sources and documents reveal a wealth of information about intimate relationships between parents and children and about the great concern for children at large throughout the Middle Ages and the early modern age which Ariès mostly discounted or was not even aware of. As Mary Martin McLaughlin observes, "The dramatic enactment of the Gospel story in art and liturgy was, in fact, among the novel experiences of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, and here a growing stress on the Infancy of Christ, and especially on such themes as the Nativity and the Adoration of the Magi, gave the images of Mother and Child a much greater prominence and often an appealing humanity."¹⁴⁸ This observation also applies to a variety of courtly romances,

¹⁴⁵ For the literary tradition, see Nancy B. Black, *Medieval Narratives of Accused Queens* (Gainesville, Tallahassee, et al.: University Press of Florida, 2003). She also discusses *Mai und Beafloer*, but only in passing, 57–61.

¹⁴⁶ *Mai und Beafloer. Eine Erzählung aus dem dreizehnten Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: G. J. Göschen'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1848), col. 175, 40–175, 2. I am presently in the process of preparing a modern German translation together with a new edition based on the Munich ms. cgm 57 (ms. A).

¹⁴⁷ For a parallel, historically documented case where a Jewish mother argued to Pope Gregory IX in 1229 that her very young boy still needed her care and that he should stay with her instead of going with his recently converted father, see Baumgarten, *Mothers and Children*, 160–61.

¹⁴⁸ Martin McLaughlin, "Survivors and Surrogates," 133.

hagiographical texts, saints' lives, and art work.¹⁴⁹ Considering the wealth of new information, we are also in a much better position to understand the enigmatic allusion to the allegorical figure in the fourteenth-century narrative Middle English poem *Pearl*. When the narrator figure describes her as "Ho wat₃ me nerre þen aunte or nece" (233; She was nearer to me than aunt or niece, 233), and more or less identifies her as young as two years of age ("Þou lyfed not two ₃er in oure pede" [483]; Thou livedst not two years in our land),¹⁵⁰ he simply plays on the well-established motif of celestial children who evoke deep emotions in the spectators and, because of their affective appeal on parents—in this case perhaps the own deceased daughter—exert considerable influence on the listeners.¹⁵¹

The Paradigm Shift

Although I have consulted mostly literary examples, they contribute significantly to the larger exploration of human emotions and affections in premodern times.¹⁵² We may confidently conclude that the paradigm established and popularized by Philip Ariès through his famous study *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime*, first published in 1960, now can be discarded. This does not mean that medieval children were regarded and treated just as modern children. Such generalizations do not make much sense in the first place, though James A. Schultz's blanket statement "that their idea of childhood was different from ours and that they may have valued childhood somewhat less than we do. Most cultures in the world, including most premodern European cultures, attach less importance to childhood than we do," seems to be another fallacy resulting from the assumption that the past has always to be viewed through the absolutist lense of otherness.¹⁵³ Neither then nor today could we claim that childhood was the same in all western societies, among all religious and social groups, and in all families. Children were

¹⁴⁹ See, above all, the contributions by Eva Parra Membrives, Diane Peters Auslander, Carol Dover, Marilyn Sandidge, and Jean E. Jost to this volume.

¹⁵⁰ *The Pearl*. Medieval Text with a Literal Translation and Interpretation by Mary Vincent Hillmann (1961; Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967).

¹⁵¹ Robert J. Blanch and Julian N. Wasserman, *From Pearl to Gawain: Forme to Fynisment* (Gainesville, Tallahassee, et al.: University Press of Florida, 1995), 48.; see also the comments by William Vantuono in *Pearl*. An Edition with Verse Translation. Trans. William Vantuono (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 115–16.

¹⁵² *Emotionalität: Zur Geschichte der Gefühle*; see also *Emotions and Choice from Boethius to Descartes*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund and Mikko Yrjönsuuri. Studies in the History of Philosophy of Mind, 1 (Dordrecht and Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002).

¹⁵³ James A. Schultz, review of Nicholas Orme's *Medieval Children in Medievalia et Humanistica* 30 (2004): 156–59; here 159.

probably as often abused, neglected, and hurt in the Middle Ages as today.¹⁵⁴ By the same token, many medieval parents loved their children as much as modern parents do, but the focus of the public discourse involving childhood has changed dramatically. In fact, the more documents are available from one society—as was the case at least since the twelfth century—the more we learn about all its members, groups, organizations, and administration, hence also about children.¹⁵⁵ When Ariès argued, for example, that “Nothing in medieval dress distinguished the child from the adult” (51), he confused the official representation of children in the visual arts, for example, as heirs to the throne, with the emotional dimension of parent-child relations which many marginal accounts of children within courtly romances, chronicles, or on paintings reveal. Ariès’s paradigm of medieval childhood could only be maintained in its traditional form if a vast majority of sources would indeed confirm his claims. As we have seen, however, any more perceptive examination of vernacular biblical texts, hagiographical literature, courtly narratives, didactic treatises, but also of frescoes, sculptures, burial sites, and children’s toys, not to mention official records, sermons, folkloric tales, and legal books, indicates the extent to which many, if not most, parents regarded their children with great love and expressed, for instance, their profound suffering when they had to part from them.¹⁵⁶ Evidence for these observations can also be found in a wide variety of historical documents and literary narratives, as suggested by Robert Fossier in his *La petite enfance dans l’Europe*¹⁵⁷ and also by Daniele Alexandre-Bidon and Didier Lett in their *Enfants au Moyen Age*.¹⁵⁸

Virtually all children were loved from the moment when they were born, and parents dedicated much of their energy and resources to raise their children to grow up into respected members of their society. As Geoffrey of Auxerre emphasizes in his biography of Bernard of Clairvaux, even before the child was born, his “mother loved him more dearly than all other [children], motivated as

¹⁵⁴ Pierre Riche and Daniele Alexandre-Bidon, “L’enfant au moyen age,” 28.

¹⁵⁵ Mathias Behr, *Eltern und Kinder*, 229–32, 42–44, et passim.

¹⁵⁶ K. C. King, “The Mother’s Guilt in Hartmann’s *Gregorius*,” *Mediaeval German Studies Presented to Frederick Norman on the Occasion of His Retirement* (London: University of London, Institute of Germanic Studies, 1965), 84–93. Both Lancelot’s mother and his foster mother, the fairy, in the Old French *Prose Lancelot* and in the Middle High German *Prosalancelot* reflect profound pain when they lose the child, in the first case because of kidnapping, in the second because the protagonist has grown up and wants to move into the world of knighthood; see Carol Dover’s contribution to this volume.

¹⁵⁷ Robert Fossier, ed., *La petite enfance dans l’Europe médiévale et moderne: actes des XVIes Journées internationales d’histoire de l’Abbaye de Flaran, septembre 1994* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 1997).

¹⁵⁸ Transl. as *Children in the Middle Ages*, 1999.

she was by the oracle sent by God."¹⁵⁹ Hagiographical literature, though primarily composed for religious purposes, often contains significant information about deep-seated attitudes toward children, though here often children assume the function of saints and martyrs at a very early stage.¹⁶⁰ Barbara A. Hanawalt emphasizes that "authors of the hagiographies called upon the everyday experiences of more conventional children to flesh out the childhood years of these miracle workers."¹⁶¹ Moreover, the miracles performed by saints often concern children who were the most accident prone and who therefore caused their parents the most worries, which the narrative accounts demonstrate vividly: "They speak of the grief of the parents, and they even inform us that a female child of three was still nursing at her mother's breast."¹⁶² Furthermore, when children died, parents were often said to express their heavy grief through tears, screams, and laments. As Hanawalt concludes, "The medieval and Renaissance sources make clear the depth of emotion over the loss of children for both mothers and fathers."¹⁶³ In fact, any careful examination of relevant passages in historical accounts and in literary narratives where mothers and their children interact will demonstrate the extent to which Ariès was entirely wrong in his estimation of maternal love, mistaking official statements and visual representations of future rulers, for example, with the actual conditions within families, whether we think of Herzeyloyde in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, of Floraete in Gottfried von Strassbourg's *Tristan*, or the widowed mother in Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale*.¹⁶⁴ The anonymous narrator of the thirteenth-century *mære* "Dis ist von dem Heselin" comments, for example, that children can always be delighted with simple gifts and do not care about political, military, and economic aspects. In fact, "ein kint den apfel minnet / und næme ein ei vürz richste lant" (a child loves the apple and

¹⁵⁹ Here quoted from Peter Dinzelbacher, *Bernhard von Clairvaux: Leben und Werk des berühmten Zisterziensers* (Darmstadt: Primus, 1998), 3.

¹⁶⁰ See, for example, David Tinsley's contribution to this volume. Mary Dzon also addresses this issue in a slightly different vein in her article in this volume.

¹⁶¹ Hanawalt, "Medievalists and the Study of Childhood," 446.

¹⁶² Hanawalt, "Medievalists and the Study of Childhood," 447; see also Didier Lett, *L'enfant des miracles: Enfance et société au moyen âge: XIIe-XIIIe siècle*. Collection historique (Paris: Aubier, 1997); see also Pierre André Sigal, "Les accidents de la petite enfance à la fin du moyen âge d'après les recit de miracles," *La petite enfance dans l'Europe médiévale et moderne*, 59–92.

¹⁶³ Hanawalt, "Medievalists and the Study of Childhood," 454. Parallel evidence can be gathered in the huge corpus of late-medieval and early-modern funeral sermons ("Leichenpredigten"), see my study "Die Darstellung von Frauen in Leichenpredigten der Frühen Neuzeit: Lebensverhältnisse, Bildungsstand, Religiosität, Arbeitsbereiche," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 108, 3–4 (2000): 291–318; here 313.

¹⁶⁴ Alexandre-Bidon and Didier Lett, *Children in the Middle Ages*, 54–56.

takes an egg in the place of the richest country).¹⁶⁵ Such a comment would not have made sense if the author could not have relied on his audience's confirmation of this psychologically sensitive observation of children's mentality.¹⁶⁶

In the fifteenth century Albrecht von Eyb formulated the significant comment regarding the relationship between parents and children, quoting Ambrosius: "das die oeltern sollen gedencken wie sy auch kinder sind geweest / so soellen die kinder gedencken / wie sy auch kuenfftig oeltern werden moegen" (that the parents should remember that they also once had been children, and the children should keep in mind that they will be parents one day in the future), emphasizing both obedience to the parents and parents' love of their children whom they ought to respect and acknowledge in what they truly are: children.¹⁶⁷

Although many of the literary, religious, and historical sources from the Middle Ages pass over children because the authors are primarily concerned with adult issues, this does not mean at all that childhood was of no concern then. When the focus turns to children, which happens more often than has previously been assumed, then children emerge in their physical, emotional, and intellectual individuality, such as in manuscript illustrations where they stage mock tournaments on a donkey and a dog, play games of bowls, walk on stilts, keep busy with a swing, play board games, and other games.¹⁶⁸ By the same token, family relationships seem to have been much more emotional and intimate at least since the twelfth century, than those scholars following Ariès's lead have thought possible, especially because medieval society was acutely aware of the fundamental need of establishing and maintaining a community in which children could be nurtured and raised sufficiently to grow into responsible and supportive adults.¹⁶⁹ Care for and love of family members in all different stages prove to be hallmarks

¹⁶⁵ Quoted from *Novellistik des Mittelalters: Märendichtung*. Herausgegeben, übersetzt und kommentiert von Klaus Grubmüller. Bibliothek des Mittelalters, 23 (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1996), 590–616; here vv. 54–55.

¹⁶⁶ Johannes Grabmayer, *Europa im späten Mittelalter*, 2004, 123: "Die Geschichte der Kindheit als 'Albtraum,' aus dem wir gerade erwachen' (Lloyd deMause) zu betrachten oder Gefühle zwischen Eltern und Kindern erst in den letzten 300 Jahren entstehen zu lassen (Edward Shorter), das ist ein — wenn auch weit verbreiteter — gelehrter Irrglaube, der von den Quellen ad absurdum geführt wird. Die Ambivalenz der Thematik verbietet einfache oder monokausale Erklärungen und Rückschlüsse auf die Eltern-Kind-Beziehung des Spätmittelalters."

¹⁶⁷ Albrecht von Eyb, *Spiegel der Sitten*, ed. Gerhard Klecha. Texte des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit, 34 (Berlin: Schmidt, 1989), 426.

¹⁶⁸ See the illustrations, all from manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, in Alexandre-Bidon and Didier Lett, *Children in the Middle Ages*, unnumbered, between 70 and 71.

¹⁶⁹ Barbara A. Hanawalt, "Narratives of a Nurturing Culture: Parents and Neighbors in Medieval England," *Essays in Medieval Studies* 12 (1995), ed. Nicole Clifton; here quoted from the online version: <http://www.luc.edu/publications/medieval/vol12/hanawalt.html> (last accessed on March 14, 2005).

of medieval society all over Europe, even though the mortality rate of young children was very high.¹⁷⁰ As much as we have to realize that children were well taken care of, as much do we have to comprehend that widows and grandparents were also embraced by the large family and found the necessary assistance in their weakened stage.¹⁷¹ If the family failed in this task, then hospitals and convents jumped in and offered an alternative, which teaches us to be more careful in the comparison between our present society and the medieval world, which was definitely not as barbaric and primitive as modern writers tend to imagine it.¹⁷² Insofar as parents, that is, husbands and wives, from many different social classes and cultural backgrounds demonstrated a considerable degree of emotional attachment to each other, it does not come as a surprise that the same observation can be made with regard to their children.¹⁷³ A careful examination therefore quickly demonstrates that medieval didactic writers many times discussed children and their specific needs as to education, guidance, and leadership, before they could enter the world of adulthood.¹⁷⁴

Considering the intensification of social interactions and the growth of the European society by the end of the fifteenth century, as witnessed by the development of urban life, we can agree with Katherine Lynch that by that time

¹⁷⁰ Jean-Pierre Barraqué and Adrian Blazquez, "Quelques aspects de l'enfance dans l'Espagne medievale," *La petite enfance dans l'Europe medievale et moderne*, ed. Robert Fossier, 109–31; here 116, mention the figure of 280 per 1000 children throughout the entire Middle Ages and even until the eighteenth century; accordingly, they assume, in surprising parallel to Philippe Aries, that medieval parents simply accepted the death of their children and hence cared comparatively little about them: "La sagesse commande donc d'attendre et de se soumettre à la volonté de Dieu." Confusing statistics with actual reflections of people's feelings and attitudes, they argue: "La petite enfance est, donc, une période d'attente qui débouchera, peut-être dans le meilleur des cas, à l'intégration progressive du jeune dans la vie sociale" (117). The statistics, even in greater detail, are confirmed by Orme, *Medieval Children*, 113–16, but this does not mean for him that the emotional reactions by the parents were those as proposed by Aries and his students.

¹⁷¹ This topic still represents a considerable desideratum, despite some general studies dealing with the ages of man; see, for example, J. A. Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

¹⁷² Susan M. B. Steuer, "Family Strategies in Medieval London: Financial Planning and the Urban Widow, 1123–1473," *Essays in Medieval Studies* 12 (1995), ed. Nicole Clifton; here quoted from the online version:

<http://www.luc.edu/publications/medieval/vol12/steuer.html> (last accessed on March 14, 2005).

¹⁷³ Behr, *Eltern und Kinder*, 344–48; Sheehan, *Marriage, Family, and Law in Medieval Europe*, 262–77, observes a remarkable interest in *maritalis affectio*, which was discussed specifically even among the theologians and jurists. See also Neil Cartlidge, *Medieval Marriage: Literary Approaches, 1100–1300* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997).

¹⁷⁴ See, for example, Thomasin von Zerclaere, *Der welsche Gast*, ed. F. W. von Kries. Vol. 1: *Einleitung, Überlieferung, Text, die Varianten des Prosa-Vorworts*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 425, 1 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1984), 1189–1322.

the nucleus family also grew in importance within the context of the larger community, being part both of the public and the private.¹⁷⁵ It would be the topic of another study to analyze the extent to which marriage regained, maintained, or newly developed affective bonds between husband and wife. But recent research has convincingly demonstrated that affective relationships between both partners grew since the fifteenth century, which also affected parents' attitudes toward their children.¹⁷⁶

The subsequent contributions will illuminate the complex of mental-historical perspectives on emotions, affections, feelings, and social structures within the medieval and early-modern family, with the particular emphasis on the child. Whether they respond directly to Barbara A. Hanawalt's appeal or not, all our contributors would certainly agree with the basic premise of her arguments with which she concludes her study: "it is perhaps time to look again at the extent of continuity or discontinuity. Much more could be done with literary evidence than has been done to date."¹⁷⁷ The same applies to art-historical documents, archeological findings, and hagiographical literature.

Of course, by the same token, a number of literary texts could suggest the very opposite in child-parent relationships, if we think of the many cases of early oblations and child abandonment, such as in Marie de France's *lais* *Le Fresne* and *Milun*. In Hartmann von Aue's religious tale *Gregorius*, the young boy is entrusted to the water by his own mother because he is the result of incest with her brother, which finds multiple literary parallels, such as in the legend of St. Alban. Many times children are even ordered to be killed (*Wolfdietrich B*) or to be sold (Gautier d'Arras's *Eracle*, the anonymous *Floris and Blanchefleur*), but in those cases we have to be careful to assess the generic and typological strategies underlying the specific texts and to balance those with the implied assumptions about the emotional relations with the parents. In this sense, the many literary and ecclesiastical

¹⁷⁵ Katherine Lynch, *Individuals, Families, and Communities in Europe, 1200–1800: The Urban Foundations of Western Society*. Cambridge Studies in Population, Economy and Society in Past Time, 37 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹⁷⁶ Arndt Weber, *Affektive Liebe als rechte eheliche Liebe in der ehedidaktischen Literatur der frühen Neuzeit: Eine Studie unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Exempla zum locus Amor Coniugalis*. Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe I: Deutsche Sprache und Literatur, 1819 (Frankfurt a.M., Berlin, et al.: Peter Lang, 2001); see also Sheehan, *Marriage, Family, and Law*; Cartlidge, *Medieval Marriage*; Peter Fleming, *Family and Household in Medieval England*. Social History in Perspective (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, and New York: Palgrave, 2001).

¹⁷⁷ Hanawalt, "Medievalists and the Study of Childhood," 458; see also her fine overview article "The Child in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance," *Beyond the Century of the Child*, 2003; for a remarkable step forward in the direction pointed out by Hanawalt, see Daniel T. Kline, "'My Sacrifice with Thy Blood': Violence, Discourse, and Subjectivity in the Representation of Children in Middle English Literature," Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1997.

accounts of incest ought not to be read as indication of children's proportionately excessive and terrible abuse in the Middle Ages, but rather as religious tales which served the purpose to provide uplifting moral and ethical teachings about falling into sin and recovering from it through repentance.¹⁷⁸

As John Boswell has alerted us, child abandonment in those narratives practically always leads to a happy reunion later in life when the parents express their profound suffering because at one point in their past they had tried to get rid of their children. By the same token, child abandonment is consistently regarded with great empathy for the child's hard life, and the poets normally indicate that "the foster parents or guardians who find the child are wholly devoted to him, in many cases better parents than their biological counterparts."¹⁷⁹

At the end of our investigations we might discover that universal statements about childhood, such as Aries's thesis, do not hold water. However, the entirely opposite approach of idealizing the Middle Ages as a time when all parents treated their children with great love and respect, would be just as erroneous. Consequently, the contributors to this volume focus on individual cases, and examine specific documents with great care, and only the collective effort promises, in its comparative and interdisciplinary approach, to yield the desired result: a more complex, diversified, but probably more accurate understanding of childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

This new understanding, however, can only be achieved in close collaborations of literary scholars, historians, art historians, and representatives of other disciplines. Criticizing Aries for his narrow perspective, mostly fed by a modernist agenda which is predicated on the notion that the Middle Ages were 'dark' and 'barbaric' in contrast to our present, will not be effective if we embrace the same methodological and documentary framework as he did. He might have, as P. J. P. Goldberg, Felicity Riddy, and Mike Tyler suggest, simply looked "in the wrong place," assuming that childhood has to be identified with 'private life,' whereas adults only perform in public.¹⁸⁰ But historians do not need to lament the "paucity of sources and the inherent tendency of the evidence to reflect ideology rather than social practice or to privilege elites over common people and males over

¹⁷⁸ Elizabeth Archibald, "Gold in the Dungheap: Incest Stories and Family Values in the Middle Ages," *Journal of Family History* 22 (1997): 133–49; eadem, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); see also David Tinsley's contribution to this volume.

¹⁷⁹ John Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 394.

¹⁸⁰ P. J. P. Goldberg, Felicity Riddy, and Mike Tyler, "Introduction: After Aries," *Youth in the Middle Ages*, ed. idem (York: York Medieval Press, 2004), 1–10; here 3.

females."¹⁸¹ The time has come to break down the asphyxiating barriers between our disciplines and to combine our forces like in a Venn Diagram, since literary texts and marble reliefs, musical notations and archeological evidence, for instance, contribute as much to the better understanding of the past, especially the history of mentality, as decretals, saints' lives (*vitae*), chronicles, and legal documents. By now there is no doubt anymore that medieval people had, in myriad ways, emotional relationships with their children and treated them as children.

The question remains, then, how they reflected upon their feelings, how they expressed them, and how we today can tease out this important information from our sources. It is no longer good enough to lament, "The exploration of the lived lives of historical children and young people is always more difficult since children especially are all too often invisible in the historical record."¹⁸² However, as Carol Neel concludes "the family as we know it, a bi-generational household of blood relations close-knit by both economic necessity and emotional attachment, was a central product of the European Middle Ages, analogous in importance to the territorial nations or market economies whose roots lie in the same period."¹⁸³ By the same token, children were always present in the minds of the adults, and we can reach many valuable conclusions about their position within the family and how their parents treated them if we examine the evidence more carefully and with the insights of neighboring disciplines in mind. This observation applies, as Elisheva Baumgarten now confirms, both to the Christian and to the Jewish communities throughout the Middle Ages. With respect to Jewish instructions concerning mothers' treatment of their children, she comments, "R. Judah clearly expects a woman to be merciful and loving toward her children, as he says: 'For who is loyal to a child like its mother?,' and: "although they held a basic belief that most women would choose to nurse their offspring, medieval Jewish authorities made provisions to ensure infants' well-being."¹⁸⁴

The Contributions to this Volume

The present volume hopes to be a catalyst of this desired paradigm shift by focusing on a wide range of relevant documents that bring to light the emotive

¹⁸¹ Goldberg, Riddy, and Tyler, 7.

¹⁸² Goldberg, Riddy, and Tyler, 9.

¹⁸³ *Medieval Families: Perspectives on Marriage, Household, and Children*, 13.

¹⁸⁴ Baumgarten, *Mothers and Children*, 164.

relationship between parents and children, the awareness of childhood as an individual stage in human development, and the profound concern of the adult world—in the Middle Ages as much as in the Renaissance, and subsequently in the following centuries—for children in their characteristic appearance, behavior, attitudes, interests, needs, and perception of the world.¹⁸⁵ The intention, of course, cannot be to paint a rosy, idyllic picture of medieval and early-modern adults loving children, and vice versa. Violence even against the youngest members of society seems to have been, alas, a constant in human history.¹⁸⁶ Nevertheless, both aggression and love have always characterized human relations, and the purpose of our collective enterprise is focused on unearthing particularly the world of emotions concerning the relationship between adults and children in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and slightly beyond.

Ariès and his students have insinuated a specific trend in the history of childhood, predicated on a progressive development of human emotions which eventually broke free in the eighteenth century or so, thus cementing the traditional, though certainly incorrect notion of the 'dark ages.' But even in the early Middle Ages people seem to have understood and cherished family life and to have taken complete physical and psychological care of their offspring because they loved them and appreciated them for what they were. Undoubtedly, we face more difficulties in discovering relevant evidence from the relatively sparse documents produced during the Carolingian period, for example, than from twelfth- or thirteenth-century documents. But a careful analysis can, as Valerie L. Garver suggests, shed considerable light on how parents regarded their children and how they took care of them. She examines the broad interest in correcting lay children as well as those bound for the monastic life, which was a dominant concern in Carolingian culture. Insofar as many authors addressed the issue of how to correct and punish children's improper behavior, they obviously, though only indirectly, acknowledged children's lack of self-control and self-discipline, hence also their typical emotional immaturity and playfulness which naturally did

¹⁸⁵ The papers in this volume were developed on the basis of presentations given at an international symposium on *Childhood and Family Relations in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age*, at the University of Arizona, Tucson, April 30–May 1, 2004. This symposium was made possible by a generous grant from the Vice President of Research and Graduate Studies, Dr. Richard C. Powell, and by contributions from the University of Arizona Library and Department of Special Collections, the University of Arizona Medieval Renaissance and Reformation Committee (UAMARRC), the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (ACMRS, at Arizona State University, Tempe), the Departments of German Studies; Judaic Studies; Spanish and Portuguese; Sociology; English; Anthropology; Russian and Slavic Languages; and the Institute for Children, Youth, and Family, all at the University of Arizona. I owe them all my deep gratitude.

¹⁸⁶ Sander J. Breiner, *Slaughter of the Innocents: Child Abuse Through the Ages and Today* (New York, N.Y.: Plenum Press, 1990).

not accord well with the harsh rules of monastic life. Whereas adults were expected to suppress their instinctual urges and accept the convent rules as binding for all its members, the children who were supposed to be obliterated and other lay children revealed much impulsiveness, outbursts of anger, silliness, and other behavior typical of children. Accounts of holy children who never misbehave shed significant light, at least *e negativo*, on the reality of children's existence outside of the convent. In other words, the more we hear about discipline, correction, and punishments in these early-medieval sources, the more we can fathom the extent to which the church authorities, who had to struggle with typical childhood problems, and thus, almost involuntarily, reveal significant information about the emotive evaluation of Carolingian children. In other words, they were fully recognized as children much in need of education and direction so that they could grow into the world of adults.

Eva Parra Membrives confirms the findings outlined above through a close reading of the anchorite Frau Ava's *Leben Jesu* (early twelfth century). The tenth-century nun Hrotsvita of Gandersheim, who never experienced motherhood personally, mostly describes the relationship between the Virgin Mary and her child Jesus in dispassionate terms, which is also the basic pattern in the four Gospels. By contrast, Frau Ava, who introduces herself as a widow and mother of two children, one of whom has already died, decidedly focuses on the intimate feelings of the mother for her son, and vice versa, and injects the biblical account with a new female, i.e., motherly perspective, insinuating to her female audience that they might best identify with Christ's passion through a reflection of their own motherhood and consequently of their love for their children. This love might also have been, as Frau Ava's case indicates, the decisive motivational drive to turn to literary writing.

According to Mary Dzon, many Middle English childhood of Jesus poems, which were based on apocryphal infancy legends and other texts, portray the Jesus child in his natural environment and introduce him as an occasionally quite rambunctious person who runs into conflicts with his neighbors and his parents, especially with his foster-father Joseph. However, Jesus enjoys their love and tender embrace as the case would be in most families both past and present. Contrary to some contemporary criticism of this "realistic" image of the Holy Family, as Dzon suggests, the various conflict situations and their solutions invited the ordinary reader to identify with Jesus and his parents, leading to a sympathetic form of humble piety because the infinite distance between man and the Godhead was suddenly removed in favor of a sense of community with the hard-working and suffering parents Joseph and Mary, and with the lackadaisical, sometimes even aggressive, but then again very obedient and loving child Jesus. Dzon's findings are richly confirmed by numerous parallels in late-medieval art and

religious literature where a clear sense of the nature, needs, and endearing character of childhood comes forward. Dzon's article beautifully complements the results of Eva Parra Membrives's investigations of Frau Ava's considerably earlier *Das Leben Jesu*, and reconfirms the value of true interdisciplinary research in Medieval Studies.

Moreover, as we learn in Juanita Feros Ruys's contribution, the famous philosopher and theologian Peter Abelard did not hesitate to express his fatherly love for his son Astralabe in his poem *Carmen ad Astralabium* and clearly indicated to him how much his mother, Heloise, was also filled with strong feelings of maternal love. Certainly, Abelard did not sentimentalize his relationship with Astralabe, and formulated his ideas about childhood and a child's relationship with its parents in highly esoteric, perhaps even abstract terms, almost speaking like a philosopher and teacher to an advanced student. Nevertheless, he specifically acknowledged childhood as a particular stage in human development and recognized children's need for particular care, attention, and emotional embrace by their parents. Similar observations can also be made with respect to the numerous didactic texts composed throughout the Middle Ages, such as Dhuoda's ninth-century handbook of advice for her son William, Albertano da Brescia's thirteenth-century *De amore Dei*, or Chevalier de la Tour Landry's late fourteenth-century *Livre pour l'enseignement de ses filles*. Even though the advice often sounds harsh or unemotional, the fact by itself that these authors, including Abelard, made such effort to provide written guidance for their children reflects a deep concern for their well-being. These writers undoubtedly recognized their children's need for support, direction, and instruction.¹⁸⁷

Despite our best efforts to recover the history of childhood in the Middle Ages, however, we have to be careful in the interpretive assessment of specific textual genres and author's intentions. Not all children whom we encounter in hagiographical literature serve the purpose to reflect upon their parents' love and dedication to their offspring. In many saints lives, for example, the young protagonists demonstrate already at an early age their holiness, though it will fully emerge only later in their life. After having analyzed a number of relevant examples in the *Golden Legend*, David Tinsley turns to Hartmann von Aue's *Der arme Heinrich* and argues that the peasant's daughter who wants to sacrifice herself for her lord Heinrich because he can be healed only through the heart's blood of a nubile virgin willing to die for him, represents such a case. Her entire behavior, her arguments, and her determination to die strongly indicate her saintly nature, designed by the author in remarkable parallel to a traditional saint's life.

¹⁸⁷ This finds convincing confirmation, though from the perspective of an early modernist, in Allison P. Coudert's contribution to this volume.

Nevertheless, the young woman's performance has to be read before the foil of traditional children's behavior, which underscores her extraordinary spiritual empowerment through God and basically transforms her into a secular saint. Although she is introduced as a child, through God's intervention the girl sheds her childish character and would have almost gained the status of a virgin martyr if the protagonist had not suddenly learned his lesson, embraced his destiny, and refused to accept the girl's sacrifice. Subsequently, Heinrich is both miraculously healed and the girl saved from her desire to die on his behalf. Hartmann thereby accomplishes two major goals; first, he reveals a clear awareness of childhood both in its physical and affective dimension; second, he argues that God's greatness could be perceived by people irrespective of their age, gender, race, and social status.

Carol Dover concedes that most courtly romances do not pay much attention to the protagonist's personal development from childhood to adulthood, and instead focus on his or her life at court, in dangerous situations elsewhere, on conflicts in marriage, and on other adult experiences. By contrast, the Old French prose *Lancelot* offers intriguingly different perspectives, similar to Chretien's *Perceval* and Wolfram's *Parzival* in terms of the childhood narrative. Here we are told in great detail how the young boy is kidnapped by a fairy and then raised by her as if she were his biological mother. Dover demonstrates that the poet paid great respect to the emotional bond between the fairy and Lancelot and carefully depicted the boy's growing up both in physical and psychological terms. In fact, this romance provides extraordinary insights into a child's character and also into the adoptive mother's bonding with him, which makes it hard on her at the end when he is about to depart from her to return to the normal world.¹⁸⁸ There is a clear sense about the need to keep children at home until they have reached enough maturity, strength, and understanding to venture out into the world, which unmistakably refutes Philippe Ariès's thesis even with the reference to this fictional text only. This (adoptive) mother never hides her profound feeling for "her" child, though she has to allow him room for his personal growth and eventual separation. As any mother would react, this fairy is pained at the thought of Lancelot's leaving her to become a knight at King Arthur's court, but at the same time she is proud of his promising accomplishments, which then makes the next step in Lancelot's life possible. Dover's analysis contributes an important interpretation that solidly refutes Ariès's, deMause's, Schultz's and others'

¹⁸⁸ The same observation applies to the anonymous Middle High German romance *Mai und Beafloer* (late thirteenth century) where Beafloer refuses the request by the Greek nobles that her eight-year old son Schoiflôrîs return with them and assume the governance as their ruler, simply because she deems him much too young for such a task (241, 12–14).

broadly-conceived claims regarding the allegedly lacking understanding and perception of childhood and of deep parental feelings in the Middle Ages and so powerfully joins rank with the other contributions.

When in 1144 in Norwich, England, a little boy named William died under suspicious circumstances, his death was quickly utilized as an occasion for the populace to identify with his alleged martyrdom and to rise against the Jewish community as the culprits because they were supposed to have committed the murder for a blood ritual. As Diane P. Auslander demonstrates, William's death by itself was not the key catalyst, whereas Thomas of Monmouth's creation of a martyrological account targeting Jews as the culprits definitely was. Together with a novel emphasis on emotional relationships with children in the wake of a new veneration of the Eucharist, often represented as a child, at least since the twelfth century, martyrology discovered childhood as a powerful theme, as Thomas's success demonstrates. William's death, like that of other children subsequently martyred, can probably be attributed to the mother's or the family's negligence, whereas the hagiographic account, like that of other child victims of Jewish ritual murder, gave room for emotional compensation and also provided some meaning of the death of such young children. The reasons for accusing the Jews are multifold, especially their political and economic association with the new Anglo-Norman rulers who suppressed the Saxon population. Moreover, Jews treated their children in a much more loving manner, both because of religious traditions and because of the isolation of the Jewish community within a Christian world, which forced them to maintain much stronger close-knit families compared to their Christian neighbors. By the same token, the new ideal of the Virgin Mother and the Christ Child imposed feelings of guilt on many mothers whose children had died, especially when they were constantly confronted by a different parent-child model practiced by their Jewish neighbors ("inward-acculturation") and by unfamiliar rituals that allowed Jewish children to join their religious community. Consequently, as Auslander illustrates in her contribution, embracing the new child-martyr ideology allowed the Christians within Norwich and elsewhere to form a new bond amongst each other and to rally against the hostile authorities and their affiliates, the Jews. The entire process, however, was possible only because of a keen awareness of the meaning of childhood and the deep love expected from mothers for their children in parallel to the Virgin Mary's love for her son Jesus already prevalent in late twelfth-century England.

In the thirteenth century, Walter of Bibbesworth, a knight and landholder, wrote a treatise for an aristocratic family in England. Karen K. Jambeck demonstrates that the author clearly reflects his full understanding of children's particular needs at their individual ages, and that his *Tretiz* was an amazingly insightful primer for the acquisition of language within the bi- and even triglossic context in England.

Entirely contrary to Philippe Ariès's assumptions, even Bibbesworth's teaching of linguistic features to young children reveals a remarkably sympathetic and sensitive approach to childhood. Jambeck, for instance, illustrates how Bibbesworth's word-play and rhyme are particularly effective for the young auditor or reader. The author designed his treatise as a teaching tool that would help children acquire necessary language skills to enter the adult world of landed-gentry, above all, linguistic abilities appropriate for the courts and also the management of large land-holdings. Although certainly aiming for the last stage in the child's development, adulthood, the *Tretiz* proves to be an excellent testimony that medieval pedagogy respectfully approached children in their psychological, physical, and intellectual make-up, conditions, needs, interests, and abilities. In other words, following Jambeck, this medieval book used age-appropriate language, features, strategies, and learning aids which reflect Bibbesworth's full awareness of what young children needed to learn languages.

Whereas the concept of children's literature seems to be intimately connected with the modern world since ca. 1800 only, Nicole Clifton demonstrates that some medieval literature could also specifically address children, while at the same time appealing to adult readers. In her study of the *Auchinleck Manuscript*, created between 1330 and 1340 and containing one of the most important collections of Middle English literature, Clifton discovers that many of the narratives provide material of concrete interest and value for children, encouraging them to follow in their parents' footsteps and to learn the types of behavior, norms, and ideals necessary for a successful transition into the adult world both in the city and at court. The basic structural elements often closely follow the model typical of children's literature from all times and all cultures, even though, as in *The Seven Sages of Rome*, adult readers also could enjoy these tales and profit from them in multiple ways unsuspected by the young readers. Such literature proves to be both pleasurable and didactic, aiming at both instruction and entertainment, for both adults and for children. In other words, the *Auchinleck Manuscript* demonstrates that medieval poets often had children in mind when they composed their works, and collectors were well aware of age-pertinent texts which provided adequate teaching for youngsters, while they still contained meaningful messages for mature readers.

Tracy Adams observes the curious but most important phenomenon of medieval mothers caught in their social and political network which made it almost impossible for them to care for their children in the way that modern mothers do. Examining the case of Isabeau of Bavaria (1370–1435) in comparison with several contemporary conduct books, she discovers an enormous pressure on women in high political circles—but also among the lower classes—to submit to the conditions of their times and to let go of their children even though this might

have pained them tremendously. In fact, Isabeau tried her utmost to protect her children to the best of her abilities, but she was, after all, quite limited in her options and followed the traditional role model of mothers as intermediaries between their children and society, or, in the case of obliterating their children, God. Witnesses document, however, how much pain Queen Isabeau went through because, on the one hand, she lost many of her children to death at a very early age, and on the other she had to hand them over to other political powers. Adams suggests that the myth established by Philippe Ariès might have to be deconstructed because the basic framework of medieval family life, at least at the highest public level, necessitated that mothers let other entities take charge of their offspring for the general good of society. By the same token, a close reading of the relevant testimonies confirms that despite the forces in the political arena, Isabeau, obviously representative of many other high-ranking women, was deeply affected by the loss of her children, although in public not much of her emotion was revealed. In fact, many tragic scenes involving mothers and children remain hidden from our eyes, unless we learn how to read between the lines and take into account sources that Ariès and his disciples seem to have overlooked.

From both a legal and a theological, but also from a mental-historical and emotional perspective, the public discourse on infanticide can shed significant light on a society's attitude toward children. Marilyn Sandidge examines both the legal records and contemporary literary works from medieval England considering how much infanticide was thematized and treated by the authorities. Contrary to Ariès's observation regarding medieval people's lack of respect for and love of children, Sandidge can demonstrate the very opposite as far as infanticide is concerned. Both theologians and poets severely condemned this crime and harshly warned their audiences against considering this horrendous maltreatment of such young children. Even "overlaying," an accidental death occurring at night when parents lay on their children while asleep, was identified as extremely sinful out of a profound concern for children. However, the historical records list only relatively few cases of infanticide, and we also know that the church imposed fairly lenient penances on the perpetrators as long as they confessed and repented their crimes. Only once illegitimacy and private sexual life became the object of public discourse, with ever increasing strictures on people's morality and ethics, beginning in the fifteenth century and reaching its apogee in Reformation England, did the rate of infanticide grow precipitously, reflecting a dangerous trend of trying to hide pregnancies and births outside of wedlock. Nevertheless, both in the Middle Ages and in early-modern England, the public took greatest interest in children and treated infanticide—for whatever reason and under whatever conditions—both as a severe sin and as one of the worst crimes.

If we examine medieval literature from the vantage point of what they reflect about children, we often find the youngest members of society assuming pivotal roles, provoking profound emotions and triggering whole sequences of events. The childish love between Sigune and Schionatulander in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Titurel* (ca. 1220) proves to be as significant for the entire plot development as the graceful, though still somewhat playful love declaration s exchanged between Gawan and Obilot in Wolfram's *Parizval*.¹⁸⁹ Turning to representative pieces in Middle English literature, such as various Cycle Plays, Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and the alliterative *Morte Arthure* poem, Jean E. Jost explores this topic with all the necessary tools available to refute Aries's thesis most convincingly. Within the Biblical tradition, the plays project heart-rending scenes of innocently victimized and sacrificed children whose mothers deeply grieve about their terrible loss. Considering that these literary documents present behavioral models for their audiences, or directly reflect emotive conditions prevalent at those times, Jost's analysis uncovers a wealth of valuable data for the history of emotions regarding children in late-medieval English culture. The slaughtering of children serves as an icon of the utmost degree of depravity within a society, as reflected in the alliterative *Morte Arthure*. In other texts, however, fathers and mothers bitterly agonize when they have to witness their children's death which they cannot prevent. Jost also discusses the romance *Amis and Amiloun*, offering the same perspective as Albrecht Classen in his introductory examination of Konrad von Würzburg's *Engelhard*. Although the father sacrifices his children for his friend's sake, which finds a remarkable parallel in the Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac, his grief for his children almost overwhelms him, and so too his joy when he discovers them restored to life by God's grace. In a number of tales in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Jost discovers additional examples of children who are sacrificed, but their mothers regularly react with greatest dismay and horror, which unmistakably indicates that medieval audiences strongly emphasized with children's suffering and regarded parents' bonds with their children as fundamental for the well-being of the entire society. The prototypical plays, the "Slaughter of the Innocents" and "Abraham and Isaac," reflect the critical dilemma experienced by many parents who repeatedly had to witness the death of their children, but could not help them in any way. As the anonymous poets signal, medieval children's death was a tragedy, and they were not simply dispensable creatures that could be easily replaced through the birth of another child.

Sometimes medieval writers approach the issues of family and parent-child relationship in a rather unassuming manner, yet they do not deny the importance

¹⁸⁹ Christopher Young, "Obie und Obilot," 1999, 243-52.

of both and operate with them in a subtle, though at times most purposeful strategy. Daniel F. Pigg illustrates this phenomenon in his study of the English 'wannabe' mystic Margery Kempe who specifically incorporated accounts of her relationship with her own son into her *Book* and tried to model her life according to the trope of the holy family. Kempe understood her role to be that of a religious teacher, and whereas she had fairly little success with this approach in public life, she worked particularly hard in reaching out to her son and to offer him spiritual guidance as his mother. Although her son is no longer a child and instead already on his way to acquire professional training, Kempe energetically assumed the function of mother and master, trying to teach her son the necessary religious-ethical lessons and to save him from material temptations. Despite her sharp criticism of his falling into lechery, the *Book* makes absolutely clear how much she was, as a mother, concerned for him, the "frute of hir womb." Our problem as social and literary historians with Kempe's maternal attitude rests in the complicated combination of various discourses employed by her, since she talks to him as his mother, teacher, confessor, and intercessor. As Pigg alerts us, and as we can also see in the other contributions to this volume, much depends on our understanding of the discursive nature of the texts and objects under investigation.¹⁹⁰ Kempe's *Book* seems, at least on one level, to reject family and emotional bonds with her children, but on another level the account leaves no doubt that the mother in Kempe could never be suppressed, especially since she aspired to the role of the mother of God in her unceasing attempts to achieve the grace of being privileged with mystical visions. The very struggle this woman went through with her son provides proof that parent-children relationships were a matter of great concern for medieval writers, and it is our task as researchers to unearth the conflicts and tensions within the discourse in order to grasp the psycho-historical dimension which Ariès and his followers did not know about.

Contrary to most modern concepts of premodern fatherhood, and definitely in contradiction to Ariès's arguments, fifteenth-century Florentine writers such as Leon Battista Alberti and Giovanni Morelli strongly emphasized the necessity for fathers to pay great attention to their children, to raise them in a loving, respectful, and by the same token also in a moral and ethical fashion, to provide them with free time and leisure activities, to allow them to play games, and to enjoy age-appropriate toys so as to help them grow into mature, responsible, and caring citizens of their urban community. This did not exclude disciplining unruly children, but even such actions were supposed to be carried out lovingly. One of the major reasons underlying this pedagogical approach had to do with the rise

¹⁹⁰ There are significant parallels between Pigg's study and the essay by Allison P. Coudert in this volume.

of a money-based society, as Juliann Vitullo suggests, in which children required particular care so as to develop the skills necessary in the mercantile administration, in banking, and other new urban areas. However, the repeated emphasis on loving fatherhood by Alberti and others also signals that there were competing models of child raising, and that children assumed a central position within fifteenth-century society as the public debate, reflected in treatises and in paintings, focused so much on the proper, that is, emotional relationship between parents and children.

Art history has taught us that virtually all paintings, sculptures, and other artistic objects are the result of deliberate creative strategies, reflecting the wishes and intentions of the commissioning patron and the artist's models according to which s/he fashions the work. In this regard Ariès fell prey to a naive, mostly incorrect reading of early-modern paintings with images of children, and his audience until today embraces Ariès's approach because it corresponds with their own simplistic, nevertheless equally erroneous interpretation of art works. Laurel Reed demonstrates this beautifully in her examination of Titian's *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi* (1542), where the two-year-old daughter is shown in full length along with her puppy. But whereas other contemporary portraits clearly served dynastic, royal interests, the situation here is different, especially since this painting reveals a significant subtext undoubtedly reflecting Clarissa's young age and, consequently, her inability to manipulate her body as an adult, especially as a member of patrician society, would do. This is demonstrated by the multiple and contradictory moves of her body parts, ultimately revealing a considerable imbalance of her posture, typical of a young child. Reed explains this imbalance with a reference to the artistic model of the *figura serpentinata*, commonly used to reflect spontaneous artificiality, which allowed Titian, at that time certainly a fully-accomplished artist, to represent the posture of a human child who has not yet acquired the socially expected grace, or *sprezzatura*. Whereas previously scholars have already assumed, in clear contradistinction to Ariès's thesis, that Clarissa here appears as a child, Reed convincingly suggests that Titian showed the young girl in the slow process of becoming an adult, trying to imitate adult postures, but still not quite capable of accomplishing this task.

David Graizbord, in his contribution to this volume, offers a fascinating perspective into the world of the early-modern Spanish Inquisition and its abuse of child declarants and deponents. Although his cases do not necessarily address parent-children relationships per se, they all reveal the extent to which historical sources can be interpreted in our search for records of human emotions. In all cases these children were more or less unwitting instruments in the tragic destruction of their own families because they testified, under enormous pressure, to the inquisitors that individual members of their families were "Judaizers,"

which was enough for the Inquisition to condemn those adults as guilty. These young witnesses had often experienced some conflicts with their families and tried, in a rebellious mood, to get even with them, not understanding the catastrophic consequences of their actions and particularly their words in the hands of the inquisitors. These regularly made the greatest efforts to replace the child-parent relationship with a child-God relationship, and thus terribly destroyed fundamental social and emotional, that is, family structures. Consequently, the inquisitorial documents do not only shed important light on the religious and legal manipulations by the authorities, but also indicate the extent to which the authorities understood the significance of children's emotions in the battle against New Christians, or *conversos*, who were summarily accused of being "Judaizers." Just because the Inquisition relied on children's testimony, they indirectly admitted that these witnesses were children with all their mental, emotional, and intellectual characteristics.

Whereas medieval childhood was either ignored by those writers and painters interested in adult issues, or described in astoundingly emotional terms, which would strongly contradict Ariès's thesis, in the sixteenth century, in the wake of the Protestant Reformation, a new development changed all that. Allison P. Coudert observes that suddenly children were regarded as in constant danger of losing their virtues and morality. Especially girls were treated with utmost severity to prevent any possibility of moral transgression. Parenthood suddenly turned into a heavy duty of surveillance and control, and the religious reorientation of the Protestant (Lutheran, Calvinistic, Reformed) family transformed the traditional bond between parents and children into a harsh and fearful relationship. The new public discourse among preachers, educators, philosophers, and writers strongly suggests a changed attitude toward childhood, which alerts us, though from a very different perspective, that the history of childhood is not one of unchangeability, and so the history of emotions as well. The suppressive treatment of children by their parents during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries does not, however, confirm Ariès's thesis because despite the negative evaluation of these young people the discourse itself reflects the awareness of childhood and the great need by parents to take utmost care of their offspring to avoid their deeply feared transgression.

Since all our research would not do much good without being read, discussed, and taught, this book also hopes to achieve the desired paradigm shift through its use in the academic classroom. Christopher Carlsmith concludes this volume with a critical discussion of how to develop an appropriate university course on the "History of Childhood in Medieval/Renaissance Europe," based on his own experiences with a course that he taught at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. Fittingly, he reviews the relevant scholarship, including a number of

contributions to this volume, and examines important resources, pedagogical approaches, and practical teaching tools. As his students commented in their evaluations, 'childhood' as an academic research and teaching topic proves to be highly motivating, deeply instructive regarding the history of mentality and history of emotions, and refreshingly stimulating in interdisciplinary investigations. Certainly, "most scholars would now agree that no society can survive without seeing to the needs of its young, and without awareness of childhood's developmental stages from birth to adulthood." We would probably also agree that "the study of medieval childhood has made much progress, yet much also remains to be done."¹⁹¹

Last but not least, it is my great pleasure to express my gratitude to all contributors for their great collaboration, patience, open-mindedness to constructive criticism, and finally for their wonderful completed work. I am also very thankful for Dr. Heiko Hartmann's invitation to submit this work to de Gruyter and for accepting it for publication by this esteemed academic press. Thanks are also due to the University of Arizona for its outstanding support for my work through a financial grant that made the international symposium, upon which this volume is mostly based, possible in the first place, through making the conference site available, and through its excellent research resources, especially its first-rate research library.

Tucson, Arizona, March 2005

I dedicate this book to the children of this world who have always been our future

and to the Beatrice in my life,

Carolyn A. Classen Sugiyama

¹⁹¹ Petroff, "Childhood and Child-Rearing in the Middle Ages," 2004, 177.

Valerie L. Garver

(Northern Illinois University)

The Influence of Monastic Ideals upon Carolingian Conceptions of Childhood¹

By the grace of divine providence [the child Gerald] applied himself to the study of letters, but by the will of his parents only to the extent of going through his psalter; after that he was instructed in the worldly exercises customary for the sons of the nobility: to ride to hounds, become an archer, learn to fly falcons and hawks as was customary. But lest given over to useless pursuits, the time suitable for learning letters should pass without profit, divine will ordained that he should be sick for a long time with such a listlessness from weakness that he should be diverted from worldly pursuits but not hindered in his desire for learning.²

For a reader unfamiliar with Odo of Cluny's early tenth-century *vita* of Gerald of Aurillac, this passage might sound like a prelude to Gerald's entry to a monastic life. The young aristocratic boy made ill by God so that he could become an ascetic and prayerful monk.³ Instead Gerald of Aurillac grew up to be an exceptionally

¹ For valuable suggestions and comments on various versions of this essay and the paper from which it was originally drawn I would like to thank Albrecht Classen, Robert Feldacker, Tom Noble, and fellow scholars who attended the international symposium on "Childhood in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age," at the University of Arizona (April 30–May 2, 2004).

² "Qui divina providente gratia studiis litterarum applicatus est, ea tantum parentum voluntate, ut decurso psalterio, mox saecularibus exercitiis, sicut nobilibus pueris mos est, erudiretur. Scilicet ut Molossos ageret, arcista fieret, cappos et accipitres competenti jactu emitte consuesceret. Sed ne inani studio deditus, tempus ad discendum litteras congruum in vacuo transiret, divino nutu dispositum est, ut diutius aegrotaret. Tali equidem infirmitatis languore, ut a saeculari exercitio retraheretur, sed ad discendi studium non impediretur." Odo of Cluny, *Vita Sancti Geraldii Auriliacensis Comitis*, 1.4, PL 133, cols. 639–710; here col. 645. Translations are my own unless otherwise noted; here I rely heavily upon Gerard Sitwell's translation in *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Live from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Thomas F. X. Noble and Thomas Head (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania University State Press, 1995), 295–362.

³ An eighth-century example of a childhood illness as cause for entry into the religious life: Huneberc of Heidenheim, *Vita Willibaldi episcopi Eischstetensis et vita Wynnebaldi abbatis Heidenheimensis auctore sanctimoniale Heidenheimensi*, 1, ed. O. Holder-Egger. MGH, SS 15.1 (Hannover: Hahnsche

pious layman who often emulated the life of a monk while remaining in the world. Other evidence of lay childhood from late eighth- and ninth-century sources written in Carolingian controlled lands reveals a similar monkish influence. Most remaining evidence concerning Carolingian children in both the lay and religious estates comes from texts written by clerics. These texts reveal some Carolingian conceptions of childhood; the idealized nature of the remaining evidence, which includes various *topoi*, however, makes it impossible to determine the degree to which these textual depictions reflected the “reality” of childhood. For example, descriptions of and advice concerning lay children resemble stipulations concerning children in monastic rules and descriptions of children destined for the religious life. This similarity particularly applies to discussions of children in the stages of *infantia* (up to age seven) and *pueritia* (seven to fourteen) as defined by Hrabanus Maurus (c.780–856) in *De universo*.⁴ Hrabanus naturally drew from the work of antique and earlier medieval authorities concerning the ages of man, especially Isidore of Seville and Augustine of Hippo.⁵ Monastic ideals informed conceptions of lay children in Carolingian society; in particular, religious reforms sometimes focused upon correction of lay children as one means to ensure the future Christian piety of adult aristocrats.⁶

Monastic practices and ideas often seem to permeate texts dealing with the care for and instruction of lay children, particularly *vitae* and the four surviving Carolingian mirrors for aristocratic laymen by Alcuin, Paulinus of Aquileia, Jonas of Orléans, and Dhuoda.⁷ One might expect that *vitae*, mirrors for lay aristocrats,

Buchhandlung, 1887), 80–117; here 88. In a reversal of this convention, Boniface’s father became ill after objecting to his son’s entry into the religious life. Willibald, *Vita Bonifatii*, 1, ed. Wilhelm Levison. MGH, SRG 57 (Hannover: Wilhelm Levison, 1905), 1–58; here 6–7.

⁴ Hrabanus Maurus, *De universo*, 7.1, PL 111, cols. 179–85; here cols. 179–81.

⁵ Christoph Dette, “Kinder und Jugendliche in der Adelsgesellschaft des frühen Mittelalters,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 76 (1994): 1–34; here 4–5. Concerning the ages of man in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, see: Emiel Eyben, “Roman Notes on the Course of Life,” *Ancient Society* 4 (1973): 213–38; here 227–29; Emiel Eyben, “Die Einteilung des menschlichen Lebens im römischen Altertum,” *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 116.2 (1973): 150–90; Emilien Lamirande, “Les âges de l’homme d’après Saint Ambroise de Milan (d. 397),” *Mélanges offerts en hommage au Révérend Père Etienne Gareau*, eds. Pierre Brind’Amour, Ross Kilpatrick, and Pierre Senay (Ottawa: Editions de l’Université d’Ottawa, 1982), 227–33; Brent D. Shaw, “The Family in Late Antiquity: The Experience of Augustine,” *Past and Present* 115 (1987): 3–51; here 40–41; Pauline Stafford, “Parents and Children in the Early Middle Ages,” *Early Medieval Europe* 10.2 (2001): 257–271; here 262.

⁶ I am currently working on a more expansive study of Carolingian lay childhood that will address more fully many of the issues raised in this preliminary essay.

⁷ *Vitae* and other prescriptive texts allow early medievalists to comment upon issues that they could not otherwise address. Richard B. Lyman, Jr., “Barbarism and Religion: Late Roman and Early Medieval Childhood,” *The History of Childhood*, ed. Lloyd de Mause (New York: Psychohistory Press, 1974), 75–100; here 77. For example, Odo’s *vita* of Gerald can help to explain lay aristocratic culture because Gerald often presents an inverse of typical lay aristocratic behavior and actions. Stuart

and monastic rules should exhibit some similarities given that clerics wrote the majority of these texts. The only secular author of a relevant text is Dhuoda, an aristocratic laywoman, who wrote a handbook of advice for her teenage son William between 841 and 843, when he was a hostage at the court of Charles the Bald.⁸ As much as or perhaps even more so than for the high and late Middle Ages, texts from the early Middle Ages require more than the "straightforward examination" which Albrecht Classen mentioned in his introduction. Children are not the main subject of mirrors and *vitae* much less the other Carolingian texts mentioned in this essay. However, these texts do share the subject of Christian reform. In the Carolingian empire during the late eighth and ninth centuries, the desire of clerics and kings to reform the church and Christian society as a whole and the intellectual and artistic pursuits of the Carolingian renaissance fostered lay interest in monastic life.⁹ Dhuoda's familiarity with monastic ideals reveals the effects of these reforms, and some clerical authors, especially those of lay mirrors, believed the laity capable of imitating some monastic practices. Lay interest may have also spurred clerics to offer advice to the laity. Some early medieval aristocrats sought to emulate aspects of monastic life even if they remained in the world. The *imitatio monachorum* extended especially to prayer, an interest in the psalter, and *correctio*, correct Christian behavior and liturgical practices.¹⁰ Ideas

Airlie, "The Anxiety of Sanctity: St Gerald of Aurillac and his maker," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 43, 3 (1992): 372–95. Other early medieval texts reveal a similar "monastic imprint." Among these are penitentials: Rob Meens, "Children and Confession," *The Church and Childhood*, ed. Diana Wood. *Studies in Church History*, 31 (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994), 53–65; here 55.

⁸ Dhuoda, *Manuel pour mon fils*, ed. and trans. Pierre Riche (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1975). The two English translations rely upon Riche's work. Without facing Latin text: Carol Neel, ed., *Handbook for William: A Carolingian Woman's Counsel for her Son* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991, repr. 1999). With facing Latin text: Dhuoda, *Handbook for her Warrior Son, Liber Manualis*, ed. and trans. Marcelle Thiebaux (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). All citations to the *Manuel* are from Riche's edition.

⁹ Carolingian capitularies and records of synods and councils touched upon many aspects of everyday life as well as upon religious issues. Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms 789–895* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977); J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 162–389; Richard E. Sullivan, "The Carolingian Age: Reflections on its Place in the History of the Middle Ages," *Speculum* 64 (1989): 267–306; John J. Contreni, "Learning in the Early Middle Ages," *Carolingian Learning, Masters and Manuscripts*, ed. John J. Contreni (Hampshire, Great Britain, Brookfield, VT: Variorum, Ashgate, 1992), 1–21; here 9; Yitzhak Hen, *The Royal Patronage of Liturgy in Frankish Gaul To the Death of Charles the Bald (877)* (London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 2001). Also see the following essays in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, 2, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): Thomas F. X. Noble, "The Papacy in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries," 563–86; Roger E. Reynolds, "The Organisation, Law and Liturgy of the Western Church," 587–621; Mayke de Jong, "Carolingian Monasticism: the Power of Prayer," 622–53; Julia M. H. Smith, "Religion and Lay Society," 654–678.

¹⁰ For *correctio* see Percy Ernst Schramm, *Kaiser, Könige, and Päpste* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1968), 336; Giles Brown, "Introduction: the Carolingian Renaissance," *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and*

concerning appropriate behavior of Carolingian men at court drew from monastic ideals.¹¹ The prominence of monastic models in texts of this era makes it unsurprising that they helped to shape Carolingian conceptions of childhood.

Carolingian *vitae* depict children in an idealized manner, and mirrors offer prescriptions for the care of children, both suggesting some of the hopes clerics had for children and revealing some of the expected behavior, limitations, and weaknesses of children. If parents requested or sought such clerical advice, they possibly had similar expectations of their children. As one might expect, given the concern with Christian reform and the repetition of certain *topoi* in many of the texts discussing childhood, the image of children in Carolingian sources is often uniform. Among the similarities is a concern with *correctio*. By encouraging punishment and prevention through *correctio*, clerics hoped to keep young men and women from developing bad habits.¹² In so doing, they took a realistic yet relatively optimistic view of children, who, though prone to misbehavior, could grow into virtuous adults, or at least adults who strove to be virtuous, with the proper direction.¹³

Many Carolingian monks and nuns entered the religious life as children or oblates. Therefore, most scholarship to this point has focused upon children in the

innovation, ed. Roxamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1–51; here 11–28. For concern with the psalter see Paul Kershaw, “Illness, Power and Prayer in Asser’s *Life of King Alfred*,” *Early Medieval Europe* 10, 2 (2001): 201–27; here 211–13; Jonathan Black, “Psalm Uses in Carolingian Prayerbooks: Alcuin and the Preface to *De psalmorum usu*,” *Mediaeval Studies* 64 (2002): 1–60; here 1–35; Jonathan Black, “Psalm Uses in Carolingian Prayerbooks: Alcuin’s *Confessio peccatorum pura* and the Seven Penitential Psalms (Use 1),” *Mediaeval Studies* 65 (2003): 1–56; here 1–24.

¹¹ Matthew Innes, “‘A Place of Discipline’: Carolingian Courts and Aristocratic Youth,” *Court Culture in the Early Middle Ages: The Proceedings of the First Alcuin Conference*, ed. Catherine Cubitt (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 59–76; here 75–6. For a critical discussion of Alcuin’s life and intellectual contributions, see Albrecht Classen, “Alcuin und Hrabanus Maurus: Zwei Gelehrte der Karolingischen Renaissance,” to appear in *Mittelalter Mythen*. Vol 4: *Dichter, Künstler, Gelehrte*, ed. Ulrich Müller and Werner Wunderlich (St. Gallen: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 2005).

¹² This idea spread in part through *vitae*; Willibald’s *Vita Bonifatii* may have been a model for other authors of *vitae* in its depiction of Boniface’s childhood, which provided an early example of Carolingian *correctio*. Some *vitae* cited in this essay concern members of Boniface’s circle including those of Willibald, Willibrord, and Gregory of Utrecht. Walter Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter. Karolingische Biographie 750–920 n. Chr.*, ed. Walter Berschin, Vol. 3. *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Lateinischen Philologie des Mittelalters*, 10 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann Verlag, 1991), 7, 132.

¹³ Allison P. Coudert, in her contribution to this volume, reaches the opposite conclusions regarding early-modern attitudes toward children, probably because of the strong influence of Protestant ethics and spirituality. However, despite the overarching fear of children’s bad, perhaps even evil nature, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century authors implicitly also expressed deep concern and love for the youngest members of their society.

monastic life because the sources pertaining to children who entered the religious life are much more numerous than those for children who remained in the lay estate.¹⁴ Carolingian clerics and kings believed that oblates retained a purity into adulthood and obtained an education superior to that of those monks who joined as adults. Both traits were thought to make the prayers of oblates more efficacious than those of monks who entered in adulthood.¹⁵ Aristocratic families wanted to benefit from the prayers of oblates, ensuring prayer for their members' souls in life and after death. Many wealthy parents built and maintained relationships with religious houses through oblation, sometimes retaining contact with their offspring throughout their lives in contrast to the isolation from the outside world that clerical writers urged monks and nuns to practice.¹⁶ Lay children also developed connections useful to their families, and proper preparation and upbringing aided them in such endeavors. Lay children had considerable flexibility in creating bonds for their families since they could marry and could travel more readily than their relatives in the religious life. Merovingian and Carolingian convents had trouble keeping girls whose parents wished for them to make strategic marriages. In his *Regula ad virgines*, Caesarius of Arles forbade aristocratic parents from using convents as schools for daughters they intended to remove later; a capitulary of 803–804 condemned the same practice.¹⁷ In sum, Carolingian parents expected their children to build upon and maintain, through marriage and membership in religious houses, the networks of bonds that increased and preserved familial wealth and power. Clerics and quite possibly parents understood that, in order to achieve those goals, children required care and attention regardless of their future

¹⁴ Some children went back and forth between the lay and religious life, most famously Gottschalk. Scholars have examined his struggle to return to the lay life after being given as an oblate. Mayke de Jong, *In Samuel's Image: Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 73–99.

¹⁵ Idem, *In Samuel's Image*, 133–45, 245–50.

¹⁶ *De sanctis virginibus Herlinde et Reinula abbatissis Masaci in Belgio*, 4–8, AA SS Martii III (Antwerp: Johannem Mevrsium, 1688; rpt.), 385–92; here 386–87. For a case in which a family appears to have retained contact with two adult daughters who each founded a convent, see *Vita Liutbirgae Virginis. Das Leben der Liutberg*, 2 and 15, edited by Ottokar Menzel. MGH, Deutsches Mittelalter, Kritische Studientexte, 3 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1937, repr. 1978), 11 and 20. See also Mayke de Jong, "Growing up in a Carolingian Monastery: Magister Hildemar and his Oblates," *Journal of Medieval History* 9 (1983): 99–128, and Maria Lahaye-Geusen, *Das Opfer der Kinder. Ein Beitrag zur Liturgie- und Sozialgeschichte des Mönchtums im hohen Mittelalter* (Altenberge: Orlos Verlag, 1991). For a contrasting view, see John Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers: the Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 228–55.

¹⁷ Caesarius of Arles, *Regula ad virgines*, c.7.4, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, *Césaire d'Arles, Oeuvres monastiques*, I. SC 345 (Paris: Édition du Cerf, 1988), 170–273; here 186; *Capitula ecclesiastica ad Salz data* (a. 803–804), c. 6. MGH, Capit. 1.1, ed. A. Boretius (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1881), 116; Jong, *In Samuel's Image: Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West*, 64–65; Dagmar Beate Baltrusch-Schneider, "Klosterleben als alternative Lebensform zur Ehe?," *Weibliche Lebensgestaltung im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Hans-Werner Goetz (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1991), 45–64; here 57–60.

estate. References to the preparation of lay children for adult life show concern with inculcating pious Christian behavior in a group prone to misbehavior, especially among boys for whom evidence is more abundant.

Carolingian clerics recognized that children could not learn everything at once, and they explained to parents the necessity of teaching children Christian behavior and belief gradually. Even children destined for sainthood needed this sort of guidance although their *vitae* frequently include signs of the child's future piety, before birth and/or during childhood. According to Alcuin's *Vita Willibrordi*, while pregnant, Willibrord's mother miraculously saw a vision of growing light in the shape of a moon. The light entered her bosom through her mouth, signifying the light of truth that Willibrord would bring to dark places.¹⁸ Gerald of Aurillac cried out to his parents from inside his mother's womb, his cries predicting the greatness of his future actions.¹⁹ Remaining references to pregnancy, childbirth, and care of infants come mainly from similar miraculous hagiographic accounts; scant information survives from the early medieval period concerning such matters.²⁰ Childhood, *infantia* (up to 7) and *pueritia* (7–14), received significantly more attention.

Carolingian clerics recognized *infantia* and *pueritia* as formative periods during which children required special care so that they would not go astray. For example, the late ninth-century bishop Hincmar of Rheims wrote that during *infantia* and *pueritia* a child developed demeanor and behavior that would last his whole life. He used the example of Alexander the Great learning from his tutor Leonidas poor habits that he was unable to conquer as an adult.²¹ This awareness of the formative nature of childhood reflects Benedict's stipulations that abbots and monks treat children differently than adult members of monastic communi-

¹⁸ Alcuin, *Vita Willibrordi, archiepiscopi Traiectensis*, 2, ed. Wilhelm Levison. MGH, SRM 7 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1920), 81–141; here 117.

¹⁹ "quod in hujus mortalitatis clausura vitales actus erat habiturus." *Vita Sancti Geraldii*, 1.3, cols. 643–4. Such predictive prenatal events were fairly common in medieval hagiography. Mary Martin McLaughlin, "Survivors and Surrogates: Children and Parents from the Ninth to the Thirteenth Centuries," *The History of Childhood*, ed. Lloyd de Mause (New York: Psychohistory Press, 1983), 101–81; here 112.

²⁰ Gerhard Baader, "Frauenheilkunde und Geburtshilfe im Frühmittelalter," *Frauen in der Geschichte VII. Interdisziplinäre Studien zur Geschichte der Frauen im Frühmittelalter. Met hoden—Probleme—Ergebnisse*, ed. Werner Affeldt and Annette Kuhn (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1986), 126–35. That lack of information holds true for most of the Middle Ages. Lorraine C. Attreed, "From Pearl Maiden to Tower Princes: Towards a New History of Medieval Childhood," *Journal of Medieval History* 9 (1983): 43–58; here 45–46.

²¹ Hincmar of Rheims, *De ordine palatii*, Prologue. MGH, Fontes 3, ed. Thomas Gross and Rudolf Schieffer (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1980), 34–36. Hincmar composed it in 882 for Charles the Fat. See also Dette, "Kinder und Jugendliche in der Adelsgesellschaft des frühen Mittelalters," 12.

ties, which surely stemmed from late antique and classical ideas about the formative nature of childhood, especially during *infantia* and *pueritia*.²² For example, Benedict made provisions for children and old men to allow them to eat before the other monks if necessary, demonstrating a recognition that children could not always wait to eat as long as healthy adults could.²³ That understanding of the formative nature of childhood continued into the early Middle Ages, and the Carolingians recognized the necessity of instructing young children in appropriate behavior and Christian beliefs. Parents and other caretakers might have provided part of the impetus for such instruction, exerting pressure upon clerics to provide advice for raising Christian children.²⁴ Texts and sermons, which parents may have read or heard, may have helped them to understand that their children's souls were at stake.²⁵ When clerics wrote mirrors in order to aid laymen in attaining salvation while living in the world, they probably both drew from and fostered parental concern for children while working to instill Christian behavior among the laity as a whole.

In his *Liber exhortationis* of 795, Paulinus of Aquileia wrote a text sensitive to the desires and necessities of a male, lay magnate. He urged Eric duke of Friuli to behave piously, writing in language Eric would have understood, with frequent allusions to and examples from lay life. Among these, he wrote that although Eric

²² *Regula Benedicti*, 30, 37, 39, *La Règle de Saint Benoît*. Sources Chrétiennes, 181–82, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé and Jean Neufville (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1972), 554, 572, 576–78. Late antique ideas of children and family drew from ancient sources as well as Christian ones. Peter Brown, "Aspects of the Christianization of the Roman Aristocracy," *Religion and Society in the Age of Augustine*, ed. Peter Brown (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 161–82; Brent D. Shaw, "The Family in Late Antiquity," *RB*, 37, 572.

²³ Janet L. Nelson, "Parents, Children, and the Church in the Earlier Middle Ages," *The Church and Childhood*, ed. Diana Wood, 81–114; here 82–3. Although an difficult contention to prove absolutely, it conforms to other evidence concerning requests for advice or instruction from clerics during the early Middle Ages. Aristocratic laymen allegedly requested the three surviving lay mirrors by clerics: Wido of Brittany asked Alcuin (c. 800); Eric of Friuli asked Paulinus of Aquileia (c. 795); and Matfrid of Orléans asked Jonas of Orléans (c. 840s). To be sure, such "requests" may stem from literary conceit, but Charlemagne's daughters wrote Alcuin a letter requesting an exegesis of the Gospel of John. He accordingly provided them with one. MGH, Epis. 4, no. 195, 196 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1957), 322–25, see especially 324, lines 25–27. Other aristocrats, therefore, may have requested advice and instruction.

²⁵ Carolingian legislation stipulated that clerics regularly preach to the laity in a language they could understand. The most frequent subjects of sermons to the laity were basic knowledge of the Christian faith and the means to lead a Christian life. Thomas L. Amos, "Preaching and the Sermon in the Carolingian World," *De Ore Domini: Preacher and Word in the Middle Ages*, ed. Eugene A. Greene, Thomas L. Amos, and Beverly Mayne Kienzle (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1989), 41–60; here 46–49; Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Church and the Carolingian Reforms 789–895* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), 80–113; Rob Meens, "Religious Instruction in the Frankish Kingdoms," *Medieval Transformations: Texts, Power, and Gifts in Context*, ed. Esther Cohen and Mayke B. de Jong (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 51–67; here 54.

naturally desired a family, he should not let the “excuse of a wife and children” prevent him from attaining salvation.²⁶ Paulinus included family or household, “familia,” among a list of status markers laymen most wanted.²⁷ In his *Liber de virtutibus et vitiis* of c. 800, Alcuin recognized a layman’s legitimate desire for a wife and sons.²⁸ Laymen doubtless wanted families and felt affection for them, including children. Paulinus indicated the expected strength of the bond between parent and child when he used an extended analogy of that relationship to explain to Eric how he ought to love God: as much or more than he loved his earthly parents.²⁹ Paulinus recalled the care of Eric’s parents, noting that although Scripture directed parents to love their children, the love between parent and child should be less than that for Christ.³⁰ His discussion of a father’s responsibility for his family recalls Benedict’s discussion of the abbot’s responsibility for his monks. God will hold Eric accountable for the souls of his family after his death just as Benedict wrote of the abbot’s responsibility for the souls of his flock.³¹ Paulinus and Alcuin wrote that fathers wished for and loved their children for natural and material reasons; Paulinus went so far as to remind Eric that with children came accountability.

Mothers almost certainly had a similar responsibility for children. In the mid ninth-century *Vita Liutbirgae Virginis*, both natural and spiritual mothers played roles in instructing children in religious behavior and practice. Liutberga served as an aid and adopted daughter to the Saxon aristocratic woman, Gisla, learning Christian virtues and behaviors from her example. Gisla modeled and taught appropriate behavior to her son and two daughters. In turn, Liutberga served Gisla’s son, Bernard, and adopted Gisla’s former maternal role in the household, helping to mold the behavior of Bernard’s successive wives and children.³² Parents exhibit a similar concern for children destined for the religious life in other ninth-century *vitae*. According to Huneberc, Willibald’s parents lavished attention and affection upon their little boy and prayed earnestly for his recovery from childhood illness.³³

²⁶ “excusatio uxoris aut filiorum gratia.” Paulinus of Aquileia, *Liber exhortationis*, 13, PL 99, cols. 197–282; here col. 208.

²⁷ Paulinus, *Liber exhortationis*, 8, col. 203.

²⁸ “Villam emis: bonam desideras. Uxorem vis ducere: bonam quaeris. Filios tibi nasci vis: bonos optas.” Alcuin, *De virtutibus et vitiis*, 14, PL 101.2, cols. 613–38; here col. 623. Alcuin’s reference to sons, rather than to children or daughters, indicates the need for heirs; his list of lay male desires is shorter than that of Paulinus and seems to emphasize what was probably most important to lay men.

²⁹ Paulinus, *Liber exhortationis*, 21, col. 214.

³⁰ Paulinus, *Liber exhortationis*, 21, cols. 214–15.

³¹ Paulinus, *Liber exhortationis*, 29, cols. 225–26; RB 2, 442.

³² *Vita Liutbirgae Virginis* 4–10, 12–16.

³³ Huneberc of Heidenheim, *Vita Willibaldi* 1–2, 88–89.

In the *Vita Gregorii abbatis* of c. 790, Liudger described both the affection and ambition that Addula, Gregory's grandmother, had for her grandson, a future bishop of Utrecht.³⁴ In the late ninth-century *vitae* of Herlindis, Renula, and Hathumoda, the authors depicted their parents ensuring their early instruction at convents and then founding new convents for their daughters.³⁵ Mothers were often responsible for the early upbringing of their children.³⁶ In his *Vita Rictrudis* of c. 907, Hucbald of St. Amand noted that Rictrud made sure that her children were educated and established in the religious life, and she looked after the material and spiritual well-being of her granddaughter Eusebia.³⁷ Of course, these examples reflect a *topos* of hagiography, the saint's caring parent. Nevertheless, the example of virtuous and loving parents, who looked after the well-being of their children, that these *vitae* presented suggests that clerics wished to encourage parents to aid their children in leading virtuous, Christian lives. Thus, Carolingian mirrors and hagiography reveal a concern among clerics and possibly parents for instructing children in appropriate Christian behavior.

The early rearing of children, especially under the age of seven, surely took place mainly in the parental home.³⁸ More formal instruction marked the period of *pueritia*, especially for those destined to enter the religious life.³⁹ Many lay children,

³⁴ Liudger, *Vita Gregorii abbatis*, 1, ed. O. Holder-Egger. MGH, SS 15.1 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1887), 67–68.

³⁵ *De sanctis virginibus Herlinde et Reinula*, 3–4, 6–7, 386–87; Agius, *Vita Hathumodae*, 3–4, ed. Georg Heinrich Pertz. MGH, SS 4 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1841), 166–75; here 167–68.

³⁶ Régine Le Jan, *Famille et pouvoir dans le monde franc (VII^e–X^e siècle): essai d'anthropologie sociale* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1995), 56.

³⁷ Hucbald of St. Amand, *Vita sanctae Rictrudis viduae*, 10, 25, AA SS Maii, III (Brussels: Impression Anastique, 1968), 79–89; here 83 and 87.

³⁸ Some oblates entered monasteries before the age of seven. For issues of age in oblation see Jong, *In Samuel's Image: Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West* 23–36, 62.

³⁹ A general discussion of schools and the formal instruction of children in Carolingian lands lies beyond the scope of this essay. Among texts not cited elsewhere in this essay that discuss the education of children, see the following and their bibliographies: Mary Pia Heinrich, *The Canonesses and Education in the Early Middle Ages* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1924); Pierre Riche, *Education and Culture in the Barbarian West Sixth through Eighth Centuries*, trans. John J. Contreni, Third ed. (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1976); John J. Contreni, "Inharmonious Harmony: Education in the Carolingian world," *Annals of Scholarship* 1, no. 2 (1980): 81–96; Pierre Riche, ed., *Instruction et vie religieuse dans le Haut Moyen Age* (London: Variorum, 1981); Pierre Riche, *Ecoles et enseignement dans le Haut Moyen Age: de la fin du ve siècle - milieu du xie siècle*, Second ed. (Paris: Picard, 1989); M. Hildebrandt, *The External School in Carolingian Society* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); John J. Contreni, "The Carolingian Renaissance: Education and literary culture," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 709–57; Albrecht Diem, "The Emergence of Monastic Schools: the Role of Alcuin," *Alcuin of York: Scholar at the Carolingian Court*, ed. L. A. J. R. Houwen and A. A. MacDonald (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), 27–44; Mayke de Jong, "De school van de dienst des Heren. Kloosterscholen in het Karolingische Rijk," *Scholing in de Middeleeuwen*, ed. R. E. V. Stuip and C. Vellekoop (Hilversum: Verloren, 1995), 57–85; Mayke de Jong, "From Scholastici to Scioli: Alcuin and

especially boys, however, probably spent time during *pueritia* at the royal court. Benedict of Aniane was sent by his father to the court of Pippin I (751–68) in order to be “brought up among the queen’s scholars.”⁴⁰ Alcuin ran a court school during the reign of Charlemagne.⁴¹ Aristocratic families frequently sent their sons to court in order to enable them to create bonds with other boys and powerful men as well as the king.⁴² For example, Dhuoda advised her son about how he could advance himself socially by developing strong relations with the older, well-connected men at court.⁴³ Drawing explicitly from the work of Georges Duby, scholars have suggested that young boys may have obtained their educations in a group centered on one or more of the king’s sons, much as boys in twelfth-century France did.⁴⁴ This idea conforms with the importance of *Königsnähe* (proximity to the king) and the bonds aristocratic men formed among each other. If aristocratic boys at court learned similar subjects to those of royal children, they probably studied the liberal arts and how to make their way in the socially complex sphere of aristocratic and royal men. Charlemagne insisted that all his children be instructed in the liberal arts and the sons in military matters and hunting and the daughters in spinning and weaving.⁴⁵ According to Thegan, the young Louis the Pious studied the liberal arts and worldly rule.⁴⁶ Boys played in order to prepare themselves for hunting and warfare, principal activities of Carolingian male aristocrats.⁴⁷

Jonas of Orléans in his *De institutione laicali* of the 840s stipulated that lay parents provide their children with Christian teachings in a wholesome, disciplined

the Formation of an Intellectual Elite,” in *Alcuin of York: Scholar at the Carolingian court*, ed. L. A. J. R. Houwen and A. A. MacDonald (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), 45–57.

⁴⁰ Ardo, *Vita Benedicti abbatis Anianensis et Indensis* 1, ed. G. Waitz. MGH, 15.1 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1887), 198–220; here 201. English translations Gerard Sitwell’s in *Soldiers of Christ*, 215–54; here 217.

⁴¹ Jong, “From *Scholastici* to *Scioli*: Alcuin and the Formation of an Intellectual Elite,” 52–53.

⁴² Innes, “‘A Place of Discipline’: Carolingian Courts and Aristocratic Youth,” 8–10.

⁴³ Dhuoda, *Manuel*, 3.4–10, 148–84.

⁴⁴ Dette, “Kinder und Jugendliche in der Adelsgesellschaft des frühen Mittelalters,” 14–15; Innes, “‘A Place of Discipline’: Carolingian Courts and Aristocratic Youth,” 66.

⁴⁵ Einhard, *Vita Karoli magni*, 19, ed. O. Holder-Egger. MGH, SRG 25 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1911, repr. 1965), 23.

⁴⁶ Thegan, *Gesta Hludowici imperatoris*, 2. MGH, SRG 64 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1995), 178.

⁴⁷ Eric Goldberg, “‘More Devoted to the Equipment of Battle Than the Splendor of Banquets’: Frontier kingship, military ritual, and early knighthood at the court of Louis the German,” *Viator* 30 (1999): 41–78; here 45–46; Régine Le Jan, “Remises d’armes et rituels du pouvoir chez les francs: continuités et ruptures de l’époque carolingienne,” *Femmes, pouvoir et société dans le Haut Moyen Âge*, ed. Régine Le Jan (Paris: Picard, 2001), 171–89.

home.⁴⁸ Children should learn to love God and their neighbors. Jonas further wrote that it was inexcusable if parents and godparents failed to teach children of a "reasonable age" knowledge of Scripture, the mystery of baptism, and faith in the holy trinity.⁴⁹ Nevertheless Jonas recognized that children could not learn all of Christ's precepts at once.⁵⁰ While drawing heavily from Augustine in these passages, Jonas geared his message for a layman. Although oblates would have studied the same subjects that Jonas mentioned and more, they almost certainly studied them in greater depth.

Jonas of Orléans' admonition that parents teach the psalms as well as other holy texts conforms to contemporary concepts of lay piety. Just as oblates learned psalms in order to participate in the worship and prayers of their houses, lay children learned psalms in order to become pious Christians.⁵¹ Owning and knowing the content of psalters marked Carolingian aristocratic lay piety. Alcuin counseled Charlemagne to say the words of Psalm 69 to begin his first prayers of the morning followed by the Pater Noster and a series of other psalms.⁵² Dhuoda made the same recommendation to William.⁵³ In fact, Dhuoda drew heavily from the psalms when writing her handbook.⁵⁴ Passages from the psalter comprise a third of her references to other texts (roughly 200 out of 640).⁵⁵ She taught William using examples from the psalms and tried to impress upon him the need to recollect the psalms. Liutberga taught young girls sent to her for instruction how to sing psalms.⁵⁶ A few psalters appear among the items that the aristocratic couple Eberhard of Friuli and his wife Gisela bequeathed to their grown children in their will of 867.⁵⁷ This ownership and knowledge of the psalter further reveals the desire among individual aristocrats to take up some aspects of monastic life. In particular, individual lay people may have followed an ordered routine of prayer.

⁴⁸ "salutaris diciplinæ domus" Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* 1.8, col. 134.

⁴⁹ "ut cum ad intelligibilem aetatem pervenerint, et fidei et baptismatis mysterio instruantur: ut si forte latius, uberiusque in sensu divinarum Scripturarum proficere aut noluerint, aut nequiverint, saltem fide Trinitatis sanctae et mysterio sacri baptismatis inexcusabiliter existant instructi." Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* 1.8, col. 135.

⁵⁰ Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* 1.8, col. 134.

⁵¹ Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* 1.12, col. 145.

⁵² Alcuin, *Officia per ferias*, cols. 509–10.

⁵³ Dhuoda, *Liber manualis*, 2.3, 124–32.

⁵⁴ Dhuoda uses a line straight from Alcuin's preface to *De usu psalmodum*, demonstrating her familiarity with that text on the psalms. Pierre Riché, "Les bibliothèques de trois aristocrates laïcs carolingiens," *Le Moyen Age* Fourth Series. 18, or 69 (1963): 87–104; here 94; Black, "Psalm Uses in Carolingian Prayerbooks: Alcuin and the Preface to *De psalmodum usu*," 1–35.

⁵⁵ M. A. Claussen, "Fathers of Power and Women of Authority: Dhuoda and the *Liber manualis*," *French Historical Studies* 19 (1996): 785–809; here 788.

⁵⁶ *Vita Liutbirgae Virginis* 35, 44.

⁵⁷ *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Cysoing et de ses dépendances*, ed. I. de Coussemaker (Lille: Impr. Saint-Augustin, 1886), no. 1, 4.

As mentioned earlier, Alcuin urged Charlemagne to pray daily.⁵⁸ Paulinus of Aquileia and Jonas of Orléans both urged regular prayer to counter sin.⁵⁹ Dhuoda encouraged William to pray regularly, specifying how and for whom he should pray.⁶⁰ Surely familiarity with the psalms, Scripture, baptism and the Christian faith helped to make prayer more efficacious – the one praying knew what his prayers meant.

A clear parallel between ideals for oblates and those for lay children is *correctio*. Monastic texts from late antiquity through the ninth century (and beyond) emphasized correcting bad behavior both in oblates and adult monks and nuns.⁶¹ Cenobitic monasticism furthermore stressed obedience. A model oblate would have been obedient in part because of effective correction from the abbot and older monks. Dhuoda adopted the corrective and authoritative role of the abbot when she wrote her handbook, constantly explaining to William the need for loyalty to his father, lord, and herself.⁶² Her attempts to provide William with a moral compass correspond to an abbot's duty to look after the well-being of his flock. She makes at least twelve references and allusions to the *Rule of St. Benedict*, an unusual choice for a lay writer in the early Middle Ages.⁶³ She uses some of these passages to call attention to her authority and to admonish William to take her advice.⁶⁴ As or more frequently she makes these references to explain to William how to remain humble, mindful, and obedient in order to achieve the best state in which to pray and be contrite for his sins.⁶⁵ Since the main activity of monks was prayer, these passages demonstrate further the idea that young lay men ideally ought to have adhered to aspects of the monastic life.

Dhuoda's view of youth was both optimistic and realistic. Believing that some youth could achieve wisdom and piety, she argued that William could work to correct himself through effort and practice.⁶⁶ William was to cultivate his

⁵⁸ Alcuin, *Officia per ferias* cols. 509–10.

⁵⁹ Paulinus of Aquileia, *Liber exhortationis*, 28, cols. 223–25; Jonas of Orleans, *De institutione laicali*, 1.11–12, cols. 143–47.

⁶⁰ Dhuoda, *Liber manualis*, 2.3–4, 8.1–17, 124–32; 306–24 but especially 2.3.

⁶¹ RB, 2, 23–30, 542–54. *Institutio sanctimonialium Aquisgranensis*, Canon 22, ed. Albert Werminghoff. MGH, Conc 2.1 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1908), 421–56; here 452.

⁶² Claussen, "Fathers of Power and Women of Authority: Dhuoda and the *Liber manualis*," 800–01.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 794–95. She very rarely quoted the text directly. For problems concerning the version of the RB with which Dhuoda was familiar, see 796, n. 58; 804, n. 99.

⁶⁴ See especially Dhuoda, *Liber manualis*, 3.1, lines 64–65, 138 compared to RB, Prol., 412.

⁶⁵ Dhuoda, *Liber manualis*, 2.3, lines 1–4, 124–26 (RB, 20, title, 536 and 7, line 51, 486); 2.3, lines 10–11, 126 (RB, 52, line 4, 610); 2.3, line 80, 130 (RB 67, page 662); 3.10, lines 11–17, 172 (RB, 7, line 1, 472); 5.2, lines 1–2, 272 (RB 48, line 18, 602). Her discussion of humility in 1.3 also greatly resembles Benedict's in the Prologue of the RB.

⁶⁶ Dhuoda's optimism in William's ability to correct himself is apparent throughout the *Liber Manualis*

associations with other youth at court because even the young could be prudent counselors. As examples, she mentioned Samuel and Daniel who as boys were wise judges.⁶⁷ She probably drew this example from chapter 67 of the *Rule of St. Benedict*, which states that age should not dictate the order in which the monks sit or receive the kiss of peace because Samuel and Daniel, when youth, judged priests.⁶⁸ Some youth and adults, subject to sin and temptation, did not achieve such wisdom. In opening her discussion of achieving a moral life in Book 4 she employs a word, *sinpectas*, from chapter 27 of the *Rule of St. Benedict* that designated the older monks who could correct the faults of younger monks. She used this word to warn William that his potential counselors (*sinpectas*) at court, though seemingly wise, could be subject to vice and envy, especially that produced by wealth and power.⁶⁹ Her choice of this word demonstrates an understanding of *correctio* influenced by the *Rule* but tempered with a recognition of the dangerous realities of the Carolingian court. Dhuoda hoped that William would not become one of these poor counselors. She quoted a Biblical passage, 2 Timothy 4:2, in the same manner as the *Rule of St. Benedict* in order to reinforce the idea of good counsel, in this case urging William to correct others throughout his life just as the *Rule* insisted that the abbot should correct his monks.⁷⁰ *Correctio* should help to produce men who could correct others.

Other texts that discuss lay boys and care for them further emphasize *correctio*, noting the necessity of providing appropriate discipline. While churchmen sometimes emphasized the purity and potential for good in children, they just as frequently recognized that children were prone to bad behavior. Many late eighth- and ninth-century Carolingian texts stress the purity of oblates' prayer.⁷¹ Other views of early medieval churchmen about children were more ambiguous.⁷² Churchmen seem to have expected that "boys would be boys," and they thought adults should punish such misbehavior and consequently mold the boys' future conduct. Early medieval texts often present children as prone to sin and misbehavior because of their play and lack of restraint.⁷³ In contrast, Paulinus of

but especially in Chapter Four of Book Four.

⁶⁷ Dhuoda, *Liber Manualis*, 3.5, line 18, 156.

⁶⁸ RB, 63, line 6, 644.

⁶⁹ Dhuoda, *Liber manualis*, 4.1, lines 8–11, 198 (RB, 27, line 2, 548). For problems of translating and interpreting *sinpectas*, see Thiebaux, ed., *Dhuoda. Handbook for her Warrior Son*, 255, n. 3.

⁷⁰ Dhuoda, *Liber Manualis*, 4.8, lines 261–70, 254 (RB, 2, lines 23–25, 446).

⁷¹ De Jong, *In Samuel's Image: Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West* 133–45.

⁷² Nelson, "Parents, Children, and the Church in the Earlier Middle Ages," 87–88.

⁷³ For Anglo-Saxon examples, see *Vita Sancti Cuthberti Auctore Anonymo*, 1.3, 64–66 and Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, 1, 154–58 both in *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave (New York: Greenwood Publishers, 1969) and Felix, *Vita Sancti Guthlaci*, 11–17, in *Felix's Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 78–80. Felix's *Vita Sancti Guthlaci* may have been a model for Willibald's *Vita Bonifatii* and Bede's *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*.

Aquilaia wrote in his mirror for Eric of Friuli that the level of one's compunction demonstrated perfection, not age. Here he differs from Paul of Tarsus, whose passage in I Corinthians 14:20 he quotes: "Do not be little children in evil, but rather in understanding be perfect men."⁷⁴ This passage, as well as practical experience, is surely the source of the idea that children are prone to malice and spite. Such ideas in early medieval texts also undoubtedly drew from the writings of Augustine, as is the case for early medieval penitentials, handbooks for priests that listed the appropriate penance for various sins. Augustine criticized his own childhood in his *Confessions*, particularly his selfishness, lack of discipline, and theft.⁷⁵ Penitentials focused upon similar sins of boys (*pueri*): "stealing, sexual play, quarrelling, [and] lack of control in speaking."⁷⁶ Paulinus, however, emphasized that children can achieve perfection, using the example of the young Hebrew David.⁷⁷ These admonishments strongly suggest a clerical conception of childhood as a state different from that of adulthood and further demonstrate that adults had expectations concerning children's behavior that were specific to children.

Other Carolingian writers had few illusions about the innocence of childhood and youth. In his influential early ninth-century episcopal *capitula*, Theodulf of Orléans attested to the fact that boys could sin and needed to exhibit penitence for their sins.⁷⁸ Even a young girl destined to become a model of domestic virtue could fall prey to sin. In Liutberga's *vita* a demon tries to torment the adult Liutberga by recalling a childhood theft. After her needle had broken during communal work at a convent, she stole the whole needle of another girl who was away from her handiwork.⁷⁹ Hagiographers expressed amazement that boys could control their youthful impulsiveness. According to Willibald, the young Boniface was able to overcome the "fiery passions of youth" through his constant study of Scripture.⁸⁰

for Alcuin's *Vita Willibrordi*. Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter. Karolingische Biographie 750–920 n. Chr.*, 8, 122. For similar Ottonian views, see references in Dette, "Kinder und Jugendliche in der Adelsgesellschaft des frühen Mittelalters," 28–29.

⁷⁴ "Simus in malitia parvuli, et viri perfecti in sensu." Paulinus of Aquileia, *Liber exhortationis*. 43, col. 245.

⁷⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.10–20, 2.6–29, ed. James J. O'Donnell, Vol. 1 (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, 1992), 9–15, 20–22.

⁷⁶ Nelson, "Parents, Children, and the Church in the Earlier Middle Ages," 84–85.

⁷⁷ Paulinus of Aquileia, *Liber exhortationis*, 43, col. 246. Paulinus' reference to David is particularly apt in a text for a lay aristocrat. David was a great secular military and royal leader, and David was Charlemagne's nickname at court.

⁷⁸ "Nam poenitentia pueris adeo videtur necessaria, ut legamus quosdam pueros pro meritis peccatorum ministris Satanae traditos, quia absque poenitentia interierunt." Theodulf of Orléans, Second Capitulary, X, 31. MGH, Capit. Epis. I, ed. Peter Broomer (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1984), 182–83.

⁷⁹ *Vita Liutbirgae Virginis* 28, 32.

⁸⁰ Willibald, *Vita Bonifatii* 2, 8.

Willibald studied assiduously while experiencing "the foolish pranks of childhood, the unsteadiness of youth, and the disturbing period of adolescence."⁸¹ Odo of Cluny wrote about the extraordinary childhood nature of Gerald of Aurillac, impressed that he did not misbehave.⁸² Hincmar of Rheims may reveal the propensity of youth for joviality when he mentions the king "rejoicing with the youth" in describing the way the king should interact with the various people at court.⁸³ Female saints are almost invariably depicted as virtuous children who do not fall prey to temptation.⁸⁴ Overcoming a propensity to misbehavior marked these children as holy. Further, these writers indicate a clear understanding of children's natural tendency to willfulness and playfulness. In order to achieve appropriate behavior, however, most children required punishment for misdeeds.

Beatings and whippings probably comprised the most common form of childhood discipline in Carolingian lands. Parents and clerics knew the words of Proverbs 13:24, which stated that a parent who loved his child would not spare the rod but rather use it to instruct him. "Qui parcit virgae odit filium suum; qui autem diligit illum instanter erudit." The *Rule of St. Benedict* mandated corporal punishment for both children and adults.⁸⁵ In his episcopal legislation Theodulf of Orléans urged parents to ensure respectful, modest behavior in their children and to beat their sons if they showed a lack of penance for misbehavior, because the parents' blows would be better than incurring the wrath of God.⁸⁶ His statement demonstrates a concern for the sins of boys and may reflect parental reluctance to beat sons. Theodulf does not mention striking girls; one wonders how acceptable it was to beat daughters.⁸⁷ Such discipline in every day life ideally

⁸¹ Huneberc of Heidenheim, *Vita Willibaldi* 2, 89. The quotation is from the translation of C. H. Talbot in *Soldiers of Christ*, op. cit., 143–64; here 147.

⁸² Odo of Cluny, *Vita Sancti Geraldii* 1.4, cols. 644–45.

⁸³ "congaudendo iunioribus." Hincmar of Rheims, *De ordine palatii* 7.35, 92.

⁸⁴ Rudolf, *Vita Leobae*, 7, 124–25; *De sanctis virginibus Herlinde et Reinula* 4, 387; *Vita Liutbirgae virginis*, 3–5, 11–13; Agius, *Vita Hathumodae*, 2, 167; Hucbald of St. Amand, *Vita sanctae Aldegundis virginis*, 4–5, col. 861.

⁸⁵ *RB*, 23, 30, 45, 542, 554, 594.

⁸⁶ "Admonendi sunt fideles sanctae dei ecclesiae, ut filios suos et filias suas doceant parentibus oboedientiam exhibere dicente domino: *Fili, honorifica patrem tuum*. (Eccles. 7:29) Nam et ipsi parentes erga filios suos ac filias modeste debent agere dicente apostolo: *Et vos, parentes, nolite ad iracundiam provocare filios vestros*. (Eph. 6:4) Nam et hoc dicendum est eis, ut, si illi genitali affectu parcere velint iniuriis filiorum, non has impune dominus sinit, nisi forte digna paenitentia exhibeatur, et quia levius est filiis, parentum quaelibet flagella suscipere quam dei iram incurrere." Theodulf of Orleans, *First Capitulary*, XXXIII. MGH, Capit.Epis. I, ed. Peter Brommer (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1984), 131.

⁸⁷ I have found almost no early medieval references to beating girls. The Laws of King Liutprand outline when it is acceptable for a guardian to strike his female ward: only when she is a child and in need of correction may he strike her as he would his own daughter. Otherwise striking a girl or young woman could result in the guardian's loss of her *mundium*. *The Lombard Laws*, ed. and trans.

comprised not an immediate reaction to misbehavior but rather an attempt to influence positively the long term demeanor and actions of the child being punished.

Ninth-century Carolingian sources demonstrate concern with the long term repercussions of appropriate punishment and conversely of a lack of discipline. Jonas of Orléans wrote in his *De institutione laicali* of parental responsibility for correcting the sins of children early and effectively.

Furthermore there are many parents who neglect to correct their sons, while they are at a critical age, with whippings so that they proceed rightly: who, when they reach the age of reason, begin to be subject to wicked deeds, and cannot easily be restrained from evil with parental chastisement; whose sins it is certain will be ascribed to the parents who did not want to chastise them at a young age.⁸⁸

Jonas further wrote that parents should act as shepherds in their homes, recalling the role of a Benedictine abbot looking after his flock.⁸⁹ Solicitude in caring for children produced not only a house free of sin, which would naturally provide an ideal atmosphere for the children, but also eventually pious adult Christians. In his didactic biography of Charlemagne of 884, Notker the Stammerer wrote that Charlemagne punished a young man he had just appointed bishop for his childish behavior in trying to leap on a horse in an unseemly fashion. He kept him behind at court, not allowing him to be a bishop, so he could achieve the behavior ideally expected of an adult man.⁹⁰ This episode demonstrates an expectation that adults should be able to overcome the impulsivity of childhood and youth and that kings should not tolerate childish lapses in their religious and secular magnates. For our purpose, however, these sources reflect a clear awareness of the characteristic behavior of children.

Correction was not an end in itself. Proper discipline could instill Christian behavior in children, influencing their adult actions. Clerics wanted to channel the potential violence of men through early discipline. Men first learned military pursuits as children and youths. For example, Gerald of Aurillac became so skilled as a youth that he was able to "vault over the backs of horses with ease," and he "excelled in military exercises."⁹¹ The future monastic reformer Benedict of

Katherine Fischer Drew (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1973, repr. 1989), 197.

⁸⁸ "Porro sunt plerique parentes, qui filios suos dum lubricae aetatis existunt, verberibus ad bene agendum corrigere negligunt: qui cum ad intelligibilem aetatem pervenerint, et malis operibus deservire coeperint, non facile a malo cohiberi parentum castigatione possunt; quorum peccata parentibus, qui eos in tenera aetate castigare noluerunt, imputari dubium non est." Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* 2.14, col. 195.

⁸⁹ Jonas of Orléans, *De institutione laicali* 2.16, col. 197.

⁹⁰ Notker, *Gesta Karoli*, 1.6, 9.

⁹¹ Odo of Cluny, *Vita Sancti Geraldii* 1.5, col. 645; Sitwell, in *Soldiers of Christ*, 300.

Aniane, as a youth at the court of King Pippin I, was "beloved by his comrades in arms."⁹² Male love for the arms of war, for hunting and military matters concerned clerics, especially Paulinus of Aquileia, who wrote in the *Liber exhortationis* that men should instead arm themselves with spiritual riches and praise for God.⁹³ Paulinus wished to curb Eric of Friuli's love for the markers of his status: arms, horses, clothes, and land.⁹⁴ Instead Eric ought to turn his skill at arms into efforts to be a soldier of Christ.⁹⁵ Gerald was probably the perfect example of such a lay man. He never became enamored of arms and violence, even going so far as to insist that his troops and he rush into battle with the points of their spears and swords turned away from the enemy, fighting with the backs of their weapons. Odo notes that Gerald, nevertheless, was invincible.⁹⁶ Clerics and quite possibly some parents hoped that discipline and religious upbringing of lay boys would help to produce dutiful Christian soldiers, who did not excessively prize their arms. Dhuoda certainly knew all too well what failure could mean. She recognized that the violent times in which she lived made it especially difficult to navigate tangled social and political networks and still attain eternal salvation. She hoped to prepare William for such predicaments, and other Carolingian texts reveal similar concerns. Shaping the behavior of lay children could help to ensure their future success in this world and the next.

Carolingian hagiography and lay mirrors reveal an image of training and discipline for lay children that strongly resembles that for children in or bound for the religious life. Clerics naturally drew from texts with which they were familiar, including monastic rules, and they would have been more familiar with oblates than lay children. These sources nevertheless reveal something about the experience of lay childhood in Carolingian lands. These clerics hardly lived in perfect claustration. Most of the men I have mentioned appeared or lived at the royal court at some time, and bishops, such as Jonas of Orléans, Theodulf of Orléans, and Paulinus of Aquileia, would have dealt regularly with the laity. The great sensitivity to lay concerns that Jonas of Orléans and Paulinus of Aquileia particularly display indicates that references of clerics to lay children probably drew from some knowledge of lay childhood. These clerics also surely remembered their own childhoods and obviously appreciated them as such.⁹⁷ Equally the

⁹² Ardo, *Vita Benedicti abbatis*, 1, 201. English translation is Gerard Sitwell's in *Soldiers of Christ*, op. cit., 215–54; here 217.

⁹³ Paulinus of Aquileia, *Liber exhortationis*, 12, col. 207.

⁹⁴ Paulinus of Aquileia, *Liber exhortationis*, 17, col. 210.

⁹⁵ Paulinus of Aquileia, *Liber exhortationis*, 19–20, cols. 210–14.

⁹⁶ Odo of Cluny, *Vita Sancti Geraldī*, 1.8, col. 647.

⁹⁷ Perhaps Bartholomew Anglicus remembered his own childhood as he wrote about children, too. In fact, many medieval scholars discussed childhood with great sensitivity. See Albrecht Classen's introductory essay in this volume.

laity would have been familiar with monasticism; many families founded and supported monasteries. Furthermore, Dhuoda's adoption of monastic ideals and language in addressing William is not merely a result of imitating clerical works. She blended ideas of religious reform circulating at the time with her notion of a mother's duties in order to provide William with maternal advice in her physical absence.

Parents and clerics had a rather positive view of children in late eighth- and ninth-century Carolingian lands. As did adults through much of the Middle Ages, they recognized that children needed special care and discipline because they differed from adults. Although prone to sinful behavior and misdeeds, children could learn through discipline to behave in a Christian manner and become pious and virtuous members of society. Molding the behavior and actions of children ideally helped to promote uniformity in Christian practice and belief. Carolingian reforms, therefore, extended to children destined for both secular and religious life. Their ideal upbringing included similar elements: singing of psalms, familiarity with essential Christian doctrine, relatively frequent prayer, and correction of faults. Differences in childhood experience between future clerics and magnates then were not as sharp as one might guess.⁹⁸

These conclusions demonstrate not merely that relationships of affection could exist between parents and children in Carolingian lands but that Carolingian clerics encouraged the nurturing of children while working to increase Christian piety among the wealthy and powerful. An expectation of an emotional bond between parent and child doubtless helped to shape these clerical exhortations and further demonstrates, as will many of the essays in this collection, a richness and variety of emotion among medieval parents and children that Ariès did not notice. Advocating the prayer, psalms, and discipline of the monastic life among children indicates that clerics believed that lay children could achieve eternal salvation.⁹⁹ They urged parents to play a major role in such efforts. Parents may have wanted and requested such advice. Thus, both affective relationships between parents and children and institutional and cultural concern for the spiritual well-being of lay children marked the Carolingian era. Molding the behavior of lay children so that they could learn to control their impulsivity and lack of discipline meant that as adults they could more capably navigate the complex network of social bonds and ensure the strength and power of their families. Those in Carolingian lands knew

⁹⁸ Ulrich Nonn, ed., *Quellen zur Alltagsgeschichte im Früh- und Hochmittelalter*, vol. 1 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2003), 89–92. See also his selection of sources about the everyday life of early and high medieval children, 94–153.

⁹⁹ The same hope inspired sixteenth- and seventeenth-century philosophers and theologians, as Allison P. Coudert argues in her contribution to this volume.

that the future of social and political institutions and even the salvation of their immortal souls lay in the hands of their children.

Eva Parra Membrives

(Universität Sevilla)

Mutterliebe aus weiblicher Perspektive Zur Bedeutung von Affektivität in Frau Avas *Leben Jesu*

Abstract:

Despite the fact that family relations are not commonly dealt with in the relatively few texts composed by female authors in the Middle Ages, it is quite significant to observe that maternity, and, to a lesser extent, paternity and childhood are, in one way or another, objects of concern for these writers. In a surprisingly large number of these documents, these women frequently take advantage of the available space they have to express themselves and to outline their particular ideas about various social and personal relationships. Although medieval women poets deal mostly with religious issues, either in the traditional sense approved by the church or as mystical visionaries, we can also discover specific, highly individualized female perspectives regarding the discussion of contact and kinship which is usually fixed, described, and controlled by masculine authority. The female approach proves to be attractive by itself, mainly because the opinions, attitudes, and ideas expressed in their texts differ from the traditional and standardized views espoused by patriarchal society. These idiosyncratic approaches to social issues can be found, surprisingly, in contexts where the main subject is mostly religious in kind, because there we observe specific thoughts, yearnings, desires, or frustrations by which women seem to feel particularly affected. Most of all, maternity emerges as a highly personal, intimate experience, which might even shade the specific reading of the Biblical text, as powerfully exemplified by Frau Ava. In the present paper I intend to study briefly those texts written by women, all of them religious, which could lead to a better understanding of the female approach to family relations in the high Middle Ages, thus taking us closer to their thoughts and actual daily life.

Daß die uns aus dem deutschen¹ Mittelalter bekannten weiblichen Stimmen keinesfalls als unbedeutend² zu bezeichnen sind, konnte insbesondere in der feministisch orientierten Forschung³ in den letzten Jahren schon zur Genüge bewiesen werden. Auch die Feststellung, daß bei vielen der von Schriftstellerinnen

¹ Zur Erforschung der im spanischen Mittelalter entstandenen weiblichen Texte siehe die Publikationen, die aus der Madrider Forschungsgruppe "Al-Mudayna" unter der Leitung von Prof. Dr. Cristina Segura Graño hervorgegangen sind, so z. B., um nur einige zu nennen, Cristina Segura Graño, "Legislación conciliar sobre la vida religiosa de las mujeres," Angela Muñoz, María del Mar Graña, *Religiosidad femenina: expectativas y realidades* (ss. VIII–XVIII) (Madrid: Al-Mudayna, 1991); Ángela Muñoz Fernández, *Las mujeres en el cristianismo medieval. Imágenes teóricas y cauces de actuación religiosa* (Madrid: Al-Mudayna, 1989); Ángela Muñoz Fernández, *Mujer y experiencia religiosa en el marco de la santidad medieval* (Madrid: Al-Mudayna, 1988); Cristina Segura Graño, *La voz del silencio I. Fuentes directas para la historia de las mujeres (siglos VIII–XVIII)* (Madrid: Al-Mudayna, 1992); Cristina Segura Graño, *La voz del silencio II. Historia de las mujeres. Compromiso y método* (Madrid: Al-Mudayna, 1993).

² Siehe hierbei die in der Forschungsliteratur zitierten Namen, so bei Peter Dronke, *Women Writers in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), oder die Arbeiten von Albrecht Classen in idem, Hg., *Woman as Protagonists and Poets in the German Middle Ages: An Anthology of Feminist Approaches to Middle High German Literature*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 528 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1991), idem, *Frauen in der deutschen Literaturgeschichte. Die ersten 800 Jahre. Ein Lesebuch* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2000) oder seine etwas späteren Zeiten gewidmeten Untersuchungen "Die 'Querelle des femmes' im 16. Jahrhundert im Kontext des theologischen Gelehrtenstreits. Die literarischen Beiträge von Argula von Grumbach und Anna Ovena Hoyers," *Wirken des Wort* 50, 2 (2000): 189–213; idem, "Neuentdeckungen zur Frauenliteratur des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts. Beiträge von Frauen zu Liederbüchern und Liederhandschriften – ein lang verschollenes Erbe," *Jahrbuch für Volksliedforschung* 24 (1999): 34–67. Ich gestatte mir, auch auf meine eigene Untersuchung hinzuweisen, Eva Parra Membrives, *Mundos femeninos emancipados. reconstrucción teórico-empírica de una propuesta literaria femenina en la Edad Media alemana* (Zaragoza: Anubar 1998).

⁴ Jerold C. Frakes, *Brides and Doom. Gender, Property and Power in Medieval German Women's Epic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994); Susan Louise Smith, "To women's wiles i fell." *The Power of Women Topos and the Development of Medieval Secular Art*, Philadelphia, Diss, 1978; *Women and Power in East Central Europe – Medieval and Modern*, ed. Marianne Sághy (Los Angeles: Schlacks, 1996); Jennifer Carpenter (ed.), *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995); *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988); *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Erler und Maryanne Kowaleski (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003); Gerda Lerner, *Die Entstehung des feministischen Bewußtseins. Vom Mittelalter bis zur ersten Frauenbewegung* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1993); María Milagros Rivera Garretas, *Textos y espacios de mujeres. Europa, siglo IV–XV* (Barcelona: Icaria, 1990); Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller, *Masculus et femina. Systematische Grundlinien einer mediävistischen Geschlechtergeschichte* (Hamburg: HHL, 2001); *Der Frauwen Buoch. Versuche zu einer feministischen Mediävistik*, hg. Ingrid Bennewitz. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 517 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1989); Nancy Partner, *Studying Medieval Women: Sex, Gender, Feminism* (Cambridge: The Medieval Academy of America, 1993); Susan L. Cocalis, *German Feminist Poems from the Middle Ages to the Present* (New York: Feminist Press, 1986).

oder einfachen Schreiberinnen⁴ geschaffenen Texte frauenspezifische oder aber auch, um den von Rivera Garretas vorgeschlagenen Terminus zu benutzen, gynekozentrische⁵ Themen mit nicht übersehbarer Häufigkeit auftreten, ist nun längst bereits kein Novum mehr. Familiäre Beziehungen und die vielfältigen Möglichkeiten ihrer Realisierung sind dabei selbstverständlich in der von Frauen geschaffenen Literatur der erwähnten Zeit in nicht gerade spärlicher Anzahl vertreten: Figuren der Mütter, Väter, Töchter, Söhne, Brüder, Schwestern, Vetter, Cousinen, Neffen und Nichten und auch weiter entfernter Verwandtschaftsgrade werden von zahlreichen deutschen Autorinnen des Mittelalters profiliert, die Auswirkungen dieser Verbindungen auf das alltägliche Leben auf das genaueste untersucht und die verschiedensten Nuancen auch ausführlich erkundet.

Bei ihrer Analyse der zwischenpersönlichen Beziehungen räumen die Dichterinnen der frühen Zeiten jedoch den kindlichen Figuren einen verhältnismäßig geringen Spielraum ein, beschäftigen sich eigentlich nur wenig mit der Kindheit an sich. Von den autobiographischen Skizzen der Mystikerinnen abgesehen,⁶ tauchen kaum Kinder in den weiblichen Texten auf, eine Tatsache die, wenn wir uns den vorhin konstatierten Gynekozentrismus erneut in Erinnerung rufen und zudem noch an die unumgängliche weibliche Rolle der Erzieherin⁷ denken, zumindest doch überraschen müßte. Daß gemäß den von Philippe Aries in den sechziger Jahren aufgestellten Thesen⁸ zufolge im Mittelalter ein

⁴ Die Trennung ist nicht immer präzise durchzuführen. Während einige Wissenschaftler alle möglichen von Frauenhand gestalteten Texte als literarisch verstehen wollen, handle es sich hier ja um Dramen, mystische Schriften, Briefe oder sonstige schriftliche Zeugnisse, sehen andere Forscher diese Toleranz eher mit Skepsis. Siehe: "Pero, como parece obvio, no deberían administrarse las mismas dosis de entusiasmo a cualquier documento medieval femenino, a pesar de su interés extrínseco." Rafael Merida Jimenez, "Mujeres y literaturas de los Medievos ibéricos. Voces, ecos y distorsiones," *Estudios Romanícs* XXII (2000): 155–176; hier 156.

⁵ Folgendermaßen von der katalanischen Wissenschaftlerin definiert: "El ginecocrismo consiste en analizar las relaciones sociales y en pensarsu historia desde el punto de vista de las mujeres. Es decir, desplazar a las mujeres de los márgenes del saber y de los márgenes del campo de vision, que es donde estaban tradicionalmente, y situarlas en el centro. Ver el mundo y la historia desde la o las perspectivas de ellas," María Milagros Rivera Garretas, "Cómo leer en textos de mujeres medievales," *La voz del silencio II. Historia de las mujeres: compromiso y metodo*, ed. Cristina Segura Graíno (Madrid: Al-Mudayna, 1993), 17–39; hier 23. Siehe auch ihr Buch *Textos y espacios de mujeres: Europa, siglo IV–XV* (Barcelona: Icaria, 2000).

⁶ Siehe hier die umfangreiche Studie von Ralph Frenken, *Kindheit und Mystik im Mittelalter* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2002); idem, *Kindheit und Autobiographie vom 14. bis 17. Jahrhundert. Psychohistorische Konstruktionen*. 2 Bde. PsychoHistorische Forschungen, 1/1–2 (Kiel: Oetker-Voges Verlag, 1999).

⁷ "Die Erziehung der Kinder war bis zum siebten Lebensjahr Aufgabeder Mutter, von da an oblag es dem Vater, die Söhne zu erziehen, und die Mutter die Töchter," Shahr, Shulamith, *Kindheit im Mittelalter* (München: Artemis und Winkler, 1991), 134

⁸ Erschienen 1960 in Frankreich unter dem Titel *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien regime*, wurde

„mangelnder Sinn für die Kindheit“⁹ bestand, darf, vor allem für die aus weiblicher Feder entsprungenen Werke, nicht als ausreichende Erklärung für das Fehlen ebendieser biologisch unreifen Figuren hingenommen werden. Auch der Sinn für Weiblichkeit und frauenspezifische Probleme war damals angeblich nicht besonders ausgeprägt, und doch lässt sich bei nicht wenigen Autorinnen der Zeit ein quasi feministisches Schrifttum¹⁰ erkennen.

Mein Beitrag soll jedoch nicht dazu dienen, ein angeblich fehlende Interesse der literarisch aktiven Frauen an dem üblicherweise gerade ihnen anvertrauten biologischen Nachwuchs zu klären, ganz trifft ja diese Beobachtung auch nicht zu. Eher sollen nun die wenigen Dichterinnen, die sich aus den verschiedensten Gründen dazu entschlossen haben, auf welche Art und Weise auch immer die Kindheit zu thematisieren im Mittelpunkt stehen. Sie sollen uns dabei behilflich sein, die geringen, aus einer weiblichen Sicht präsentierten Beispiele dieser ersten Etappe im menschlichen Leben mit einer der am stärksten polemisierten Thesen des bekannten französischen Kindheitsforschers zu konfrontieren: das vermeintliche Ausbleiben der Liebe in den Beziehungen zwischen Eltern und ihren Kindern in der vormodernen Epoche. Wiederholt in der modernsten Forschung widerlegt,¹¹ soll diese Frage nun auf das weibliche Schrifttum gerichtet werden, um in dem heutigen Rahmen auch den Frauen der Zeit zu diesem Punkt Gehör zu verschaffen.

Die hier exemplarisch untersuchten Fälle beanspruchen dabei selbstverständlich keinen Universalcharakter, dürfen es natürlich auch nicht. Denn, obwohl sich viele dieser Texte weiblichen Ursprungs zuweilen in einigen – vor allem thematischen,

der Text bereits 1962 ins Englische übersetzt, dort unter *Centuries of Childhood, A Social History of Family Life*. Ins Italienische im Jahre 1968, *Padri e figli nell europa medioevale e moderna*. Die deutsche Übersetzung kam erst verspätet, im Jahre 1975 (München: Hanser) heraus und wurde schlicht *Geschichte der Kindheit* genannt; noch viel später erst erschien die Spanische, 1987, *El niño y la vida familiar en el Antiguo Régimen* (Madrid: Taurus).

⁹ Philippe Aries, *Geschichte der Kindheit* (München: Hanser, 1975), 51.

¹⁰ Siehe hierzu Eva Parra Membrives, *Mundos femeninos emancipados*; eadem, „Deseo y seducción. Imágenes de sexualidad y erotismo en *Gongolfus* y *Calimachus* de Roswitha de Gandersheim,“ *Philologia Hispalensis*, XVI, 2 (2002): 63–83; eadem, „Wenn weibliche Schwachheit siegt und männliche Kraft hilflos unterliegt“ *Akten I. Kongress Frauen und Macht*, Santiago de Compostela, 2004 (im Druck).

¹¹ So z.B. bei James A. Schulz, *The Knowledge of Childhood in the German Middle Ages, 1100–1350* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 2–16; Besonders interessant hierzu Nicholas Orme. Nachdem der Autor mehrere Arbeiten besprochen hat, die sich mit Kindheit im Mittelalter befassen, schließt er: „None of the scholars mentioned above has found material to support the assertions of Aries; all, in different ways, have rebutted them,“ Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 4–5. Siehe auch Albrecht Classens Einleitung zu diesem Band.

wenn auch nicht immer stilistischen – Stellen sehr eng berühren, ist Frau, und dies auch in mittelalterlichen Zeiten, nicht immer mit Frau gleichzusetzen. Nicht allein das Geschlecht des Autors oder der Autorin wird das Schrifttum bestimmen, sondern, und dies sind wohl allgemein akzeptierte Tatsachen, auch die persönliche Erfahrung, der erlebte Kontext, die sozialen Bedingungen, die Erziehung und vieles mehr. Von einer einheitlichen weiblichen Stimme aus dem Mittelalter möchten wir in diesem Moment also nicht ausgehen. Die hier präsentierten Textauszüge sollen jedoch den Versuch zu tragen helfen, ob für einige der schriftstellerisch aktiven Frauen der angesprochenen Periode die Liebe zwischen Müttern und ihren Kindern ein wichtiger, zu berücksichtigender Begriff war, oder aber nicht.

Ein bedeutungsvoller Ausdruck der mütterlichen Zuneigung und Emotivität kann zum Beispiel beim frühen Tode der Nachkommenschaft zum Vorschein kommen, laut Ariès ein im Mittelalter häufig mit stoischer Gleichgültigkeit hingenommenes Moment,¹² für ihn geradezu der Lackmus-Test einer anders verstandenen Affektivität in vormodernen Zeiten. Der Historiker Klaus Arnold kennt hier nur zwei Autorinnen aus dem Mittelalter, die in ihren eigenen Dichtungen ihren Schmerz über den Verlust ihrer Kinder zum Ausdruck bringen.¹³ Bei der ersten davon handelt es sich um die Irin Gormlaith, die im Jahre 948 als Königin starb, und in einem ihrer Gedichte den Verlust ihres kleinen Söhnchens Domhnall beklagte; die zweite ist eben gerade eine deutschsprachige Autorin, die bekannte österreichische Klausnerin Ava. "Der muoter waren diu chind lieb, der eine von der werlt sciet,"¹⁴ teilt uns diese geheimnisumwobene Dichterin am Ende ihrer Arbeit mit und bringt uns damit gleich sofort und auf unmittelbare Weise der Lösung der von uns anfangs gestellten Frage nach der Existenz der Mutterliebe näher: Der Ava waren ihre Kinder lieb, der Tod ihres Sohnes scheint sie tief getroffen zu haben. Daß es sich hierbei, zumindest bei dieser Autorin, nicht nur um leere, formelhafte Worte handelt, soll im Folgendem dargestellt werden.

¹² "Diese Gleichgültigkeit war eine direkte und unausweichliche Konsequenz der Demographie der Epoche," Philippe Ariès, *Geschichte der Kindheit*, 99ff. Siehe aber hier Robert C. Finucane, *The Rescue of the Innocents: Endangered Children in Medieval Miracles* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

¹³ Klaus Arnold, *Kind und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter und Renaissance. Beiträge und Texte zur Geschichte der Menschheit* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1980), 40.

¹⁴ Friedrich Maurer (Hrsg.), *Die Dichtungen der Frau Ava* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1966), 68; für eine knappe Einführung in ihr Werk und eine Zusammenfassung des bisherigen Kenntnisstands zu Frau Ava, siehe Albrecht Classen, "Ava, Frau," *Women in the Middle Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Katharina M. Wilson and Nadia Margolis (Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 2004), 49–52.

Die von Ava tradierten Texte lassen sich nicht gänzlich mit denen von ihren Geschlechtsgenossinnen aus ähnlichen Zeiten in eine Reihe setzen. Schon das Fehlen z.B. des sonst überall präsenten *humilitas* Topos¹⁵ überrascht, was sich vielleicht nicht unschwer erklären läßt, wenn wir besehen, wie sich die Dichterin ihrem Publikum vorstellt. Zitieren wir die genaue Stelle in der von ihrer Autorschaft die Rede ist, jetzt vollständig:

Dizze buoch dihtote zweier chinde muoter.
 diu sageten ir disen sin, michel mandunge was under in.
 der muoter waren diu chint liep, der eine von der werlt sciet.
 nu bitte ich iuch gemeine, michel unde chleine,
 swer dize buoch lese, daz er siner sele gnaden wunskende wese.
 umbe den einen, der noch lebet unde er in den arbeiten strebet,
 dem wunsket gnaden und der muoter, daz ist AVA¹⁶

Diese unübliche Vorstellung der eigenen Schreibtätigkeit ist aus verschiedenen Gründen interessant. Zum einem spricht Ava voller Selbstsicherheit von "buoch" und "dihtote," benutzt dabei klar einige für das kreativ-künstlerische Feld charakteristische Termini, scheint sich also dessen bewußt zu sein, an einem literarisch kommunikativen Akt im Sinne von Schmidts empirischer Theorie der Literatur¹⁷ teilzunehmen, zum anderen fehlt gerade an dieser delikaten Stelle vollkommen jede Referenz auf einen gnädig aufnehmenden Rezipienten des Erdichteten. Wo etwa, um einige bekannte Exempla anzuführen, die sächsische Roswitha sich damit abmühte, die Attraktivität ihrer Texte mit der Nützlichkeit für den an dem Rezeptionsprozeß teilnehmenden Leser oder Empfänger zu verdeutlichen,¹⁸ wo die Heilige Hildegard von Bingen sich auf Gottes Willen und

¹⁵ Dieses Fehlen ist schon Gössmann aufgefallen. Elisabeth Gössmann, "Die Selbstverfremdung weiblichen Schreibens im Mittelalter. Bescheidenheitstopik und Erzählungsbewußtsein. Hrotsvith von Gandersheim, Frau Ava, Hildegard von Bingen," *Akten des internationalen Germanisten Kongresses*, Band 10 (München: iudicium, 1990), 193–200; hier 199.

¹⁶ Friedrich Maurer, (Hrsg.), *Die Dichtungen der Frau Ava*.

¹⁷ Manfred Beetz, Gerd Antos, "Die nachgespielte Partie. Vorschläge zu einer Theorie der literarischen Produktion," Peter Finke; Siegfried J. Schmidt, (Hrsg.), *Analytische Literaturwissenschaft* (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1984), 90–141; Helmut Hauptmeier, Siegfried J. Schmidt, *Einführung in die empirische Literaturwissenschaft* (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1985); siehe dazu auch Edmund Nierlich, "Wissenschaftstheoretische Überlegungen zu einer praxisentfaltenden empirischen Literaturwissenschaft," Peter Finke, Siegfried J. Schmidt, (Hrsg.), *Analytische Literaturwissenschaft*, 203–239; Siegfried J. Schmidt, *Grundriß der empirischen Literaturwissenschaft*. Band 2. *Zur Rekonstruktion literaturwissenschaftlicher Fragestellungen in einer empirischen Theorie der Literatur* (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1982).

¹⁸ "[...] ne crediti talentum ingenio sub oscuro torpens pectoris [antro] rubigine negligentiae exterminaretur, sed sudulae malleo devotionis percussus aliquantulum divinae laudationis referret

Entscheid stützte und mit ihrem Schreiben selbstlos die Ehre des Allmächtigen anstrebte,¹⁹ demarkiert sich Ava von ihren Kolleginnen. Die von dieser Dichterin kreierten Texte sollen trotz ihres heilsgeschichtlichen Inhaltes nicht der Erbauung, des seelischen Heiles oder einfach nur der Freude des Lesers oder Empfängers dienen, auch nicht das Lob der göttlichen Herrlichkeit besingen, was im allgemeinen von den Autoren der Zeit angegebene und somit als gültig anerkannte Ziele des Schreibaktes waren.²⁰ Eher egoistisch und selbstbezogen scheint da fast die Intentionalität ihres, der Ava, eigenen Schreibprozesses zu sein, denn die zugestandene Absicht ist es, mit Hilfe der niemals als bescheiden beschriebenen Arbeit die Rezipienten des von ihr geschaffenen Textes darum zu bitten, ihren Söhnen dabei zu helfen, eine höhere Gnade von Seiten Gottes zu erwerben.²¹ Ava erwartet, daß mit ihrer Arbeit ihrem verstorbenen Sohn geholfen wird, ihrem noch lebendem, sich der Geistlichkeit widmenden Sohn geholfen wird, und, zu guter Letzt, daß ihre Arbeit auch ihr selbst zum Vorteil gereichen kann. Dabei vergißt sie völlig, die Leser oder Empfänger des Textes über den ihnen selbst zustehenden Nutzen des eingegangenen Rezeptionsprozesses zu belehren.

Wir stehen also vor einem schriftlichen Akt, bei dem die Mutterliebe Priorität besitzt und als Ausgangspunkt und Motivation einer literarischen Handlung angesehen werden kann. Liebe – eine laut Aries vermeintlich nicht sehr verbreitete Art von Liebe – steht hier als Auslöser eines kommunikativen, dem künstlerischen Bereich zuzuordnenden Vorganges, was wohl die so oft, meist von nicht Mediävisten, zitierte Beobachtung von der angeblichen Einseitigkeit der mittelalterlichen Literatur in dieser Hinsicht Lügen strafen kann.²² Man sollte an

tinnitum, quo, si occasio non daretur negotianduo aliud lucrari, ipsum tamen in aliquod saltim extremae utilitatis transformaretur instrumentum," *Hrotsvithae Opera*, hrsg. von Helene Homeyer, (München: Schönigh, 1970), 38.

¹⁹ "Ich komponierte auch Lieder und Melodien zur Ehre Gottes und der Heiligen, ohne je eine entsprechende Ausbildung erhalten zu haben," M. F.-B. Brocchiere, "Hildegard, die Prophetin," Ferruccio Bertini (Hrsg.), *Heloise und ihre Schwestern. Acht Frauenporträts aus dem Mittelalter* (München: Beck, 1991), 192–221; hier 194ff.

²⁰ Siehe Eva Parra Membrives, "El concepto de literatura en la Edad Media alemana. Algunos ejemplos de reflexiones sobre teoría literaria en obras medievales," *Philologia Hispalensis* XIV (2000): 207–218. Ähnliche Motivation läßt aber auch bei Dhuoda feststellen. Siehe dazu den Beitrag von Valerie Garber in diesem Band.

²¹ Vgl. dazu Ernst Ralf Hintz, "Differing Voices and the Call to Judgment in the Poems of Frau Ava," *Medieval German Voices in the 21st Century: The Paradigmatic Function of Medieval German Studies for German Studies. A Collection of Essays*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Internationale Forschungen zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft, 46 (Amsterdam und Atlanta: Editions Rodopi, 2000), 43–60.

²² Gerhard Plumpe, Niels Werber, "Literatur ist codierbar. Aspekte einer systemtheoretischen Literaturwissenschaft," Siegfried J. Schmidt, *Literaturwissenschaft und Systemtheorie* (Opladen:

dieser Stelle ebenfalls nicht übersehen, daß Ava mit ihrem "dizze buoch dihtote zweier chinde muoter" augenscheinlich beweist, daß sie nicht als Dichterin in Erinnerung bleiben und definiert werden möchte, auch nicht als eine den geistlichen Regeln folgende, der Frömmigkeit anheimgegebene Christin, nicht einmal als Frau, sondern offenbar einfach nur als Mutter, die ihre Kinder liebte. Zugestanden ist der noch lebende Sohn höchstwahrscheinlich zu dem Zeitpunkt der literarischen Kreation dem Kindesalter längst entwachsen, hat damit schon ein chronologisches Gebiet betreten, das selbst für Aries die mütterliche Zuneigung zuläßt. Von dem bereits verstorbenen Sohn der Ava vermag man aber in dieser Hinsicht nichts Genaueres zu behaupten, ein extrem kurzer Lebenslauf kann als ebenso möglich angesehen werden wie ein längerer; es liegen in der Hinsicht keinerlei Beweise oder Dokumente vor. Und auf keinen Fall darf die Liebe, die Ava an ihre Söhne bindet, ungeachtet des Alters derselben, bezweifelt werden.

Die Mutter-Sohn Beziehung, für die sich Ava aus, wie wir gesehen haben, persönlichen, biographischen, Gründen besonders interessiert,²³ findet ihren glanzvollsten Ausdruck in dem emotiven Bild, das die Autorin von der engen Verbindung zwischen einer leidenschaftlich liebenden Mutter Gottes und dem ebenfalls in diesem Sinne sehr gefühlsvollen Jesus darstellt.

Diese sehr präzise beschriebene Proximität zwischen Mutter und Kind findet bei Ava bereits im Moment der Schwangerschaft ihren Anfang, d.h. mit dem für Maria anfänglich verwirrenden Bewußtsein ihres begnadeten Zustands. Die Auszeichnung, die der heiligen Jungfrau gewährt worden ist, erhebt sie über den Rest der Menschheit, hat aber auch neben der positiven eine ausgesprochen negative Seite, denn sie distanziert die bis dahin auch nicht ganz gewöhnliche Frau definitiv von ihren Mitmenschen. Als ihr junger Körper beginnt, die Veränderungen zu spüren, die durch die Empfängnis einer neuen Lebensfrucht entstehen, kann das Mädchen, im Unterschied zu anderen, sich in einer zumindest ähnlichen, wenn auch natürlich nicht identischen Situation befindenden Frauen, ihre ersten Eindrücke und Gefühle mit niemandem vergleichen. Ihre Erfahrung ist einzigartig, die psychologische Belastung, die dadurch entsteht, nicht einen neuen Menschen, sondern den Sohn Gottes in sich zu wissen, sehr wahrscheinlich stark, kann aber von Maria mit niemandem geteilt werden. Quasi als Außenseiterin abgestempelt, ist sie in diesem Punkt einzig auf sich selbst angewiesen, zur

Westdeutscher Verlag, 1993), 9–43.

²³ Und dies, trotz Brinkmann: "Und das darf jetzt schon gesagt werden, daß dem Mittelalter unmittelbar persönliche Aussprache nicht letzter Wert war," Hennig Brinkmann, *Zu Wesen und Form mittelalterlicher Dichtung* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1979), 10.

Einsamkeit verbannt, eine ohne jeden männlichen Beistand²⁴ dastehende Frau, die sich um ihr Kind sorgt. Eine der wahrscheinlich verwitweten Autorin nicht ganz unbekannte Erfahrung, die die Mutter noch näher an ihr Kind bindet als gewöhnlich, aus dem Bewußtsein heraus, daß nur sie und es ein adäquates Verständnis für ihrer beider Außergewöhnlichkeit haben:

< . . > do der da geherbergote der si gebildote,
also geistlichen si in enphie, so wizzet daz diu geburte ergie.

Iedoch getruobte si daz daz si eine da saz.
Do sprach Sancte Gabriel: „niht furhte du dir,
iz is dir wol ergangen, du hast ein chint enphangen.
Danne wahset ein man, der wirt geheizen gotesun,
Jesus wirt er genennet, des elliu werlt mendet’.
Diu magit geloupte ime daz, der gotesun sa mit ir was.“²⁵

Wiederholen wir jetzt den an dritter Stelle zitierten Vers, „Iedoch getruobte si daz daz sie eine saz.“ Marias Einsamkeit, Angst und die daraus entstehende Melancholie sind von der Autorin bildhaft dargestellt worden. Kein Wort hier von Joseph, der doch zumindest materiell der sich in der damaligen Gesellschaft wohl kaum allein durchsetzenden Frau als Stütze gelten muß. Denn Ava spricht nicht von einem physischem Alleinsein, das von Maria auch nicht, wie aus der Geschichte bekannt, erlebt wird, sondern von einer emotiven Verlassenheit. Mit ihrer Mutterliebe steht sie allein da, mit ihrer Freude, mit ihrer Angst, mit ihren entgegengesetzten Gefühlen, mit der gesamten, sich zwischen Mutter und Sohn einstellenden Erfahrung.

Sehr aufschlußreich ist diese soeben untersuchte Textstelle, da sie in den Evangelien kaum Erwähnung findet, und das, was die Schwangerschaft für Maria aus einem physischen und psychologischen Standpunkt bedeuten könnte, völlig übergangen wird. Matthäus, der in seinem Text die Szene der Menschwerdung Gottes schildert, vergißt dabei sogar vollständig die Rolle der Maria und erzählt lediglich, wie ein unbenannter Engel den heiligen Joseph über die außerordentliche Auszeichnung seiner Frau aufklärt.²⁶ Übergangslos geht der heilige Apostel

²⁴ Interessant ist hierbei die Marginalisierung der Josepfsfigur bei Ava, die nur eine sekundäre Rolle spielt; siehe dazu jetzt den Beitrag von Mary Dzon zu diesem Band.

²⁵ Friedrich Maurer (Hrsg.), *Die Dichtungen der Frau Ava*, 12; vgl. dazu die Gestaltung der Mutterrolle Herzeloyses in Wolframs von Eschenbach *Parzival*. Siehe dazu die Einleitung zu diesem Band: Albrecht Classen, „Philippe Aries and the Consequences: History of Childhood, Family Relations, and Personal Emotions: Where do we stand today?“

²⁶ „Haec autem eo cogitante, ecce angelus Domini apparuit in somnis ei, dicens: Ioseph fili David, noli timere accipere Maïam coniugem tuam: quod enim in ea natum est, de Spiritu sancto est./ Pariet autem filium: et vocabis nomen eius Iesum: ipse enim salvum faciet populum suum a peccatis eorum

von der Ankündigung der Schwangerschaft—wohlbemerkt nicht an die direkt betroffene Person, also Maria, sondern an Joseph gerichtet—zu der Geburt Jesu über. Das monatelange Warten wird vergessen, die weibliche Erfahrung in den Hintergrund gerückt, von einer möglichen Angst oder Einsamkeit der Maria ganz zu schweigen.

Auch der frauenfreundlichere Lukas geht nicht näher auf dieses ausschließlich den Frauen reservierte Erlebnis ein. Obwohl er, anders als Matthäus, für die Schilderung der Empfängnis der Maria auch die Präsenz der Maria für wichtig hält, mangelt sein Evangelium doch an jenem Einfühlen, das bei Ava so deutlich wurde. Lukas fügt eine ausführlich geschilderte Begegnung zwischen Gabriel, dem Erzengel, und einer nicht näher beschriebenen Jungfrau aus Nazaret, deren Name, wie bekanntgegeben, Maria war, ein.²⁷ Doch die ausgedehnte Szene endet mit einem sicheren, überzeugten "Ecce ancilla Domini" der Jungfrau, verzichtet erneut darauf, von emotiven Regungen, von den mit einer nicht erwarteten Mutterschaft verbundenen psychologischen Auswirkungen zu sprechen. Maria gehorcht, nimmt ihr Schicksal hin, denkt nicht, fühlt nicht, ist hier keine Mutter, sondern nur eine gläubige Jüdin.²⁸

Interessant wirkt hierbei, daß die Darstellung dieses bedeutsamen Erlebnisses, selbst wenn aus einer weiblicher Perspektive gestaltet, auch nicht unbedingt mit Avas mütterlicher Sorge übereinstimmen muß. Betrachten wir dabei, als komparatives Beispiel, Roswithas von Gandersheim Legende *Maria*, bei der die

/ Hoc autem totum factum est, ut adimpleretur quod dictu est a Domino per prophetam dicentem: / Ecce virgo in utero habebit, et pariet filium: et vocabunt nomen eius Emmanuel, quod est interpretatum Nobiscum Deus. / Exurgens autem Ioseph a somno, fecit sicut praecepit ei angelus Domini, et accepit coniugen suam / Et non conoscebat eam donec peperit filium suum primogenitum: et vocavit nomen eius Iesum." Mt. 1: 20–25.

²⁷ "In mense autem sexto, missus est angelus Gabriel a Deo in civitatem Galilaeae, cui nomen Nazareth /, ad virginem desponsatam viro, cui nomen erat Ioseph, de domo David, et nomen virginis Maria. / Et ingressus angelus ad eam dixit: Ave gratia plena: Dominus tecum: benedicta tu in mulieribus / Quae cum audisset, turbata est in sermone eius, et cogitabat qualis esset ista salutatio / Et ait angelus ei: Ne timeas Maria, invenisti enim gratiam apud Deum: / Ecce concipies in utero, et paries filium, et vocabis nomen eius IESUM: / hic erit magnus, et Filius Altissimi vocabitur, et dabit illi Dominus Deus sedem David patris eius: et regnabit in domo Iacob in aeternum, / et regni eius non erit finis. / Dixit autem Maria ad angelum: Quomodo fiet istud, quoniam virum non cognosco? / Et respondens angelus dixit ei: Spiritus sanctus superveniet in te, et virtus Altissimi obumbrabit tibi ideoque et quod nascetur ex te sanctum, vocabitur Filius Dei. / Et ecce Elisabeth cognata tua, et ipsa concepit filium in senectute sua: et hic mensis sextus est illi, quae vocatur sterilis. / quia non erit impossibile apud Deum omne verbum. / Dixit autem Maria: Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum. Et discessit ab illa angelus." Luk 1: 26–38.

²⁸ Vgl. dazu jetzt die bemerkenswerten Ausführungen von John D. Martin, *Representations of Jews in Late Medieval and Early Modern German Literature*. Studies in German Jewish History, 5 (Oxford, Bern, et al.: Peter Lang, 2004).

Dichterin sich mit genau denselben Geschehnissen aus der Heilsgeschichte befaßt. Nach einer detaillierten Beschreibung der Kindheit Marias, bei der eine außergewöhnlich selbstsichere, intelligente und autonome Persönlichkeit der Jungfrau, und dies schon vom Kindesalter an, hervorgehoben wird,²⁹ entschuldigt sich die sächsische Autorin für die nur kargen Worte, die sie sowohl der Empfängnis, als auch der Schwangerschaft widmen wird:

Nicht können meine schwachen Worte
 Hier jene Unterredung bringen,
 die Gabriel gepflogen mit Maria,
 der Sendling mit der Heilandsmutter;
 noch brauch ich im Gedicht zu schildern,
 wie tief und bitter Josephs Leiden,
 welcher Kummer ihn unnötig quälte,
 als er Maria schwanger wußte,
 wie ihm dann nächstens Trost geworden
 und wie ein Engel ihn beauftragt,
 für Sohn und Mutter treu zu sorgen³⁰

Überraschen muß diese Aussage, wo doch anderen Begebnissen lange Versreihen und nicht minder ausführliche Reflexionen eingeräumt werden. Zum Beispiel, um Marias Wunsch, enthaltsam zu bleiben, zu verdeutlichen, scheut Roswitha es nicht, diese außergewöhnliche weibliche Figur mit dem Hohepriester, der damaligen geistlichen Autorität, zu konfrontieren,³¹ hält ihre eigenen Worte in dieser Situation keineswegs für schwach und sich selbst für unfähig. Fühlt sich die jungfräuliche, von der Schwangerschaftserfahrung somit ausgeschlossene Kanonissin etwa an dieser Stelle überfordert? Das unterschiedliche Verständnis, das beide Autorinnen, Ava und Roswitha, von der Figur der Maria haben, die eine, sich intensiv dem Aspekt der Mutterschaft widmend, die andere, eher die Jungfräulichkeit unterstreichend,³² könnte vielleicht darauf schließen lassen.

²⁹ Eva Parra Membrives, "Wenn weibliche Schwachheit siegt."

³⁰ In der Übersetzung von Helene Homeyer, Roswitha von Gandersheim, *Werke* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1936), 51. Das lateinische Original wie folgt: "Ergo non nostris potis est exponier orsis / Nobile colloquium longo sermone peractum, / Virginis aeternae, Christi matris benedictae / Partus et tanti sacra narrantis paranimphi: / sed nec dactilicis opus est nos psallere cordis / Magnum maerorem Ioseph durumque dolorem, / Frustra cordetenus quo iam fuerat cruciatus, / Talem dum gravidam sensisset forte puellam, / Qualiter et tristis solatur tempore noctis, / Virginis intactae iussus cuam retinere / Virginis et nati nobis de sidere missi," *Hrotsvithae Opera* 67f.

³¹ Eva Parra Membrives, "Wenn weibliche Schwachheit siegt."

³² Für Ava ist Marias Jungfräulichkeit unwichtig, Helmut de Boor, *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* (Halle: Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1926), 122. Für Roswitha dagegen ist die Jungfräulichkeit das wichtigste Thema überhaupt in ihrem gesamten Schrifttum. Siehe Ferruccio Bertini, *Heloise und ihre Schwestern*, 131; Hugo Kuhn, "Hrotsviths von Gandersheim dichterisches Program," Hugo Kuhn,

Schreiben wird von diesen Frauen als Ausdruck persönlicher Erfahrung und Emotivität aufgefaßt, was ich an dieser Stelle noch einmal wiederholen möchte. Die nie schwanger gewordene Roswitha kann sich gerade in diese Rolle der Maria nicht einfühlen, ihr nicht die nötige Emotivität entgegenbringen und verzichtet also ganz auf sie. Für die Mutter in doppelter Ausführung Ava ist dies aber ein nicht zu übergehender Punkt, denn gerade hier befindet sich der Ursprung der authentischsten aller Lieben, der Gefühle einer Mutter für ihr Kind.

Es soll nun auch zugestanden werden, daß nicht allen den sich mit dem oben analysierten Moment befassenden Texte gänzlich die Emotivität fehlt. Einige apokryphe Schriften, so das Protoevangelium des Jakobus³³ z.B. erwähnen im Zusammenhang mit Marias Schwangerschaft die verzweifelten Tränen, die von der Mutter Gottes vergossen werden, als Joseph sie der Untreue verdächtigt. Es handelt sich hierbei jedoch um eine aus sozialem Unverständnis für eine vaterlose Mutterschaft geborene Angst, d.h. um eine Angst entstanden aus dem ohnmächtigen Unvermögen der Maria, der Öffentlichkeit ihre sexuelle Unschuld zu beweisen. Von Liebe zu dem noch ungeborenen, in ihr bereits aufwachsenden Sohn kann hier jedoch nicht die Rede sein, denn keinerlei Bezug wird von der Frau zu ihrem Kind hergestellt, die Schwangerschaft ist lediglich ein Anschwellen des Bauches, nichts, was positive emotionelle Regungen mit sich bringen könnte, auf keinen Fall ein Liebeserlebnis.³⁴

Die nächste Textstelle, an der uns von Ava die Liebe zwischen Christus und Maria, seiner Mutter, verdeutlicht wird, bezieht sich auf ein Ereignis Jahre nach der Geburt, und zwar erst bei dem Verlust des Jesukindes im Tempel. Aus den Evangelien ausschließlich durch die Lukas zuzuordnende Information bekannt,³⁵ spricht der Heilige mit einem einschließenden "parentes" von den besorgten, den vermißten Knaben suchenden Eltern. Selbst Marias scheltender Ausruf, als sie endlich den sich ihr geistig entgleitenden Sohn entdeckt, beruht auf der Pluralform, "Fili, quid fecisti nobis sic? Ecce pater tuus et ego dolentes quarebamus te." Auf den schon dem ersten Kindesalter entwachsenen Sohne haben, so Lukas, beide Elternteile gleichwertige Rechte. In ihren Ängsten, Befürchtungen des Verlusts diesmal, schließt die lukasche Maria ihren Ehemann mit ein, teilt die

Dichtung und Welt im Mittelalter (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1969), 91–104, hier 100; Fidel Rädle, "Hrotsvit von Gandersheim," Horst Albert Glaser, Ursula Liebertz-Grün (Hrsg.), *Deutsche Literatur. Eine Sozialgeschichte* Band 1. *Aus der Mündlichkeit in die Schriftlichkeit: Höfische und andere Literatur, 750–1320* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1986), 84–93; hier 89.

³³ Erich Weidinger, *Die Apokryphen. Verborgene Bücher der Bibel* (Augsburg: Pattloch, 1989), 428ff.

³⁴ Die Szene beschreibt die Schwangerschaft folgendermaßen: "Tag um Tag aber wurde ihr Leib stärker," Erich Weidinger, *Die Apokryphen*, 439.

³⁵ Lukas 2: 41–52.

Erfahrung der Mutterschaft also, womit hier von emotivem Alleinsein nicht ausgegangen werden kann.³⁶

Natürlich muß Ava, wenn sie konsequent mit dem gleich zu Anfang der Mutter-Kind Beziehung Erläutertem bleiben will, dieses Ereignis auf eine andere Weise präsentieren, und dies tut sie auch. Die Geschichte an sich stimmt fast identisch mit der des Lukas überein, doch bewilligt sich die österreichische Schriftstellerin einige bezeichnende Freiheiten, die den Sinn der Szene prägnant in die von ihr angestrebte Richtung umschlagen läßt. Statt ein vorwurfvolles, zurechtweisendes "Quid fecisti," äußert Maria bei Ava ein trauriges, jedoch zugleich liebevolles "sage, liebez chint, mir, waz hast du begangen an mir?"³⁷ und personalisiert mit diesem wiederholten "mir" die bei dem Evangelisten von beiden Elternteilen gleichmäßig ausgestandenen Qualen. Der bei Ava von dieser innigen Mutter-Kind Beziehung ausgeschlossene Joseph, schon bei der Schwangerschaft abseits stehend, war, wie die Heilige Maria zugesteht, an der Suche des Jungens eifrig mitbeteiligt, doch der marternde Schmerz entspringt allein dem Mutterherzen, betrifft diese Mutter, die selbst nach drei Tagen verzweifelter Suche nicht vergißt, ihren Sohn zuallererst mit "liebez chint" anzusprechen.

Noch eine zusätzliche, nur anscheinend unbedeutsame Distanz zu den Aussagen von Lukas läßt sich bei Ava finden. Das Ende dieser dramatischen Szene wird von dem Evangelisten mit einem "Et descendit cum eis, et venit Nazareth: et erat subditus illis" abgetan, wo ein resignierter, von seinen Eltern, wieder im Plural, gesetzlich abhängiger Jesus sich ihnen in Abwartung seiner Volljährigkeit anschließt. Ava war diese sachliche Abfinden scheinbar zu kalt, und so modifiziert sie die Szene der Heimkehr sachte, aber bestimmt folgendermaßen:

Si baten in mit in gen, si neliezen in da niht besten.

Si fuorten in mit guote zuo der rechten haimuote

In di burch ze Nazareht, ez newart e noch sit

Nie nehein man siner muoter so gehorsam³⁸

Jesus verläßt den Tempel nicht aufgrund der Bestimmung, sondern der Bitten der Eltern, die ihn liebevoll, d.h. "mit guote" heimführen. Die Rückkehr des Knaben und die gutmütige Aufnahme beider Elternteile, hier unübergebar, schien Ava aber zu generell zu sein, ließ die Mutterschaft nicht genügend hervortreten und sich vor der Vaterschaft, hier eigentlich Stiefvaterschaft,

³⁶ Vgl. dazu die emotiven Äußerungen Marias und Josephs in den *Meditationes Vitae Christia* aus dem 13. Jahrhundert. Zur Rolle des Joseph und seiner Beziehung zu Jesus siehe auch den Beitrag von Mary Dzon in diesem Band

³⁷ Friedrich Maurer (Hrsg.), *Die Dichtungen der Frau Ava* 18.

³⁹ Friedrich Maurer (Hrsg.), *Die Dichtungen der Frau Ava* 19.

auszeichnen. Ihr letzter, dem eben eben behandelten Geschehen gewidmeter Vers gleicht auch sofort die Situation aus, und die enge Beziehung zwischen Mutter und Sohn wird wieder hergestellt: "nie nehein man siner muoter so gehorsam," sagt Ava, und beschreibt somit die Rückerstattung von Seiten des Kindes der von der Mutter jahrelang geschenkten Liebe. Jesus kehrt aus Liebe zu seiner Mutter nach Nazareth zurück, beweist diese Liebe mit äußerstem Gehorsam, werden ja keinerlei Anzeichen des resignierten Abwartens einer Emanzipation deutlich. Seine Kindheit hat Jesus an Marias Seite anscheinend genossen und als glückliche Zeit erlebt. So sieht es, zumindest, Ava.

Überraschenderweise findet die bekannte Stelle in Roswithas *Maria* überhaupt keine Erwähnung, was insofern zu bedauern ist, als uns nun eine weitere weibliche, eventuell aufklärerische Sicht dieses bedeutungsvollen Ereignisses verloren geht. Das Versäumnis der Gandersheimer Autorin ist, wie gesagt, verwunderlich, da die von ihr gedichtete, hier betroffene Legende diverse Aktionen eines kindlichen Jesus sogar schon im Säuglingsalter registriert, diese konkrete eben zitierte aber übergeht. Die heilende Kraft der christlichen Windeln, das Vorzeigen des Neugeborenen an die Großeltern, die Verbannung nach Ägypten auf der Flucht vor Herodes Zorn,³⁹ all dies wird in einem neutralen, sachlichen Ton von der sächsischen Dichterin dargestellt, ohne daß je eine besonders enge Beziehung zwischen Maria und ihrem Sohne angedeutet würde. Selbst die weiter ausholenden familiären Verhältnisse Mutter-Vater-Kind, also mit Einschließung Josephs, scheinen völlig von Affekten frei zu sein, beschrieben wird lediglich das Handeln von allen drei, niemals hingegen das Denken oder gar das Fühlen dieser Figuren.

Bemerkbare Spuren einer leicht emotiven Mutter-Sohn Beziehung, wenn auch von weitem nicht in der Linie der Ava gestaltet, lassen sich bei Roswitha erst während der von der Familie in der Wüste verbrachten Zeit auffinden, und auch da in kaum angehauchter Weise. Nach einer langen, ermüdenden Reise beschließt die Heilige Familie, eine kurze Verschnaufpause einzulegen, und dabei gelüstet es der durstenden Maria plötzlich, einige saftige Datteln zu kosten, die sich leider außerhalb ihrer Reichweite befinden. Die Heilige Jungfrau spricht ihr Ersehnen laut aus, offenbar in der Hoffnung darauf, ihren Wunsch durch ihren Ehemann erfüllt zu bekommen, doch Joseph tut die ihm geltende Anspielung mit der Begründung "Du forderst allzuviel"⁴⁰ sofort ab. Da, in jenem präzisen Augenblick, entschließt sich der zweijährige Jesus zu einem Einschreiten. Sein der Palme geltender Befehl: "Du, Palme, neige deine Wipfel, / damit nach Wunsch die Mutter

³⁹ *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 72ff.

⁴⁰ In Homeyer Übersetzung, Roswitha von Gandersheim, *Werke*, 58. Im Original "Hoc miror certum te dicere velle," *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 76.

pflücke“⁴¹ wird sofort ausgeführt und der durstenden Maria damit Linderung verschafft.

Wo bei Ava das Substantiv „muoter“ stets von einem Zärtlichkeit ausdrückenden Adjektiv wie etwa „guot“ oder „liep“ begleitet wurde, mangelt es bei Roswitha nun jeder näheren Bestimmung. Die Dichterin beraubt ihr Publikum sogar des Eindrucks, den die wundersame Aktion des Kindes auf Maria ausübt, denn einzig die Macht eines, trotz seines Alters kaum als kindlich zu beschreibenden⁴² Christus wird hervorgehoben, nicht ein möglicher, seiner Mutter geltender Liebesakt.

Daß es sich auch überhaupt nicht darum handelt, daß die Rücksicht des Sohnes der Mutter gegenüber mehr einem der Höflichkeit ähnelnden Gefühl als der Kindesliebe zuzuschreiben ist, oder, wenn schon Affekte an der soeben analysierten Handlung mitbeteiligt sein sollten, diese als nichts anderes als allgemein empfundene Nächstenliebe beschrieben werden kann, wird dem Leser sofort augenscheinlich, wenn er etwas weiter in der Legende fortschreitet. Mehrere wundersame Entscheidungen trifft während seiner Wanderung das göttliche Kleinkind, mal dem Joseph zur Hilfe reichend, mal allein sein eigenes allmächtiges Können beweisend.⁴³ Maria nimmt aber in diesem Kontext auf keinen Fall eine elitäre Rolle ein, sie ist für den roswithianischen Jesus keine besondere, aus vielen anderen hervorstechende Figur. Der Mutteraspekt der Maria ist der Roswitha völlig unwichtig, keine emotionellen Implikationen gehen aus ihm hervor, ganz anders also als bei Ava.⁴⁴

Kehren wir nun erneut zur Österreicherin zurück und betrachten wir einen letzten, von Liebe zeugenden Auszug ihres Textes, diesmal nah an das Lebensende des Erlösers gelangend.

Die Anwesenheit der Maria beim Kreutode Christi wird in den Evangelien nur von Johannes erwähnt, während sowohl Matthäus als auch Markus und Lukas die Heilige Jungfrau in einem sehr ähnlich gestalteten Bericht völlig vergessen.

⁴¹ Roswitha von Ganderheim, *Werke*, *ibid.*, „Arbor, flecte tuos summo de vertice ramos, / ut, quantum libeat, de te mater mea carpat,“ *Hrotsvithae Opera*, *ibid.*

⁴² Dabei entspricht das Kind völlig dem Bilde, das schon bei stark religiösen oder heiligen Kindern üblicherweise in der Literatur aufzufinden ist und schon im frühesten Alter erwachsene Züge aufzeigt. Siehe Klaus Arnold, *Kind und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter und Renaissance*, 64ff.

⁴³ *Hrotsvithae Opera*, *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Roswitha ignorierte freilich Kindheit und Kindernicht gänzlich, wie das Auftreten der drei Mädchen Fides, Spes und Caritas in dem Drama *Sapientia* vor Augen führt, die jedoch primär eine allegorische Funktion besitzen; siehe dazu Daniel T. Kline, „Trascible Children in Hrotsvit's *Sapientia*,“ *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: Contexts, Identities, Affinities, and Performances*, ed. Phyllis R. Brown, Linda A. McMillin, and Katharina M. Wilson (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 77–95.

Johannes, sehr darauf bedacht, sein Publikum daran zu erinnern, daß er von Jesus dazu auserlesen wurde, sich von der Mutter Gottes an Sohnes statt annehmen zu lassen,⁴⁵ beschreibt dabei kaum den Zustand der sicherlich doch leidenden, einsamen Frau.⁴⁶ Ganz anders Ava, deren pathetische, einfühlsame Verse wieder mal das autobiographische Element anklingen lassen:

Owi, Maria Magdalena, wie gestunte du ie da,
da du dinen herren guoten sahe hangen unde bluoten,
unde du sahe an sinem lie di gestochen wunden!
Wie mohtest du vertragen die laitlichen chlage
Siner trut muoter Sancte Marien der guoten!
Wie manigen zaher si gaben ze dem selben male
Diniu chiusken ougen min vil liebiu frouwe,
o du sus sahe handelon din unschuldigen sun,
o man in marterote also sere daz fleisk daz er von dir
genommen hete!⁴⁷

Es sei hier besonders auf die von der Dichterin zur Intensivierung der Szene benutzten Adjektive geachtet. "Laitlich" sind die Klagen der "trut" Mutter. Maria sieht außerdem, wie ihr Sohn gemartert wird und denkt dabei an das Fleisch, das er von ihr genommen hat. Die Wortwahl ist besonders emotiv konnotiert, ein von ihr kreierter Körper kommt Maria in den Sinn, wobei sie auf ein Verbundensein anspielt, daß bei der Schwangerschaft seinen Anfang und nun sein tragisches, schmerzhaftes Ende findet. Die Tortur, die für Maria die Betrachtung des Leidens ihres Sohnes bedeutet, wird aus dieser kurzen, aber sehr ausdrucksvollen Stelle offenkundig. Ava, die selbst den Verlust eines Sohnes erlebt hat, schildert einen die Mutter seelisch zerreißen den Tod, ein extremes Leiden, einen authentischen Schmerz, Gefühle, die Sohn und Mutter gleichsam betreffen und die die von Ariès verteidigte Affektlosigkeit somit gänzlich negiert.

Wie verschieden da aber die fast siegreichen Verse der Roswitha in ihrer Legende *Ascensio–Die Himmelfahrt des Herrn*:

Nach diesen Worten sprach er [Christus] milde
Zu seiner Mutter, der Maria:
'O traure nicht, du reine Jungfrau,
da du mich siehst gen Himmel fahren.
Ich scheide nicht von dir, du helle
Leuchte der Nacht, mein heiliger Tempel,

⁴⁵ Johannes 19: 17–30.

⁴⁶ Da Joseph zu jener Zeit nicht mehr erwähnt wird, muß von einer verwitweten Maria ausgegangen werden.

⁴⁷ Friedrich Maurer (Hrsg.), *Die Dichtungen der Frau Ava*, 43.

du unversehrte Lebenskrone,
 du einzige, die ich rein gefunden
 und würdig meinen Leib zu tragen⁴⁸

Der milde, fast fröhliche und gar nicht leidende Christus der Roswitha bleibt selbst in seiner Todesstunde ausdruckslos. Hervorheben möchte er von seiner Mutter einzig die Reinheit, und dies wiederholt, fast bis zur Ermüdung, hingegen keineswegs die mütterliche Sorge, den Schmerz, was Ava so wichtig war. Roswitha schildert die Szene von ihrem persönlichen Standpunkt heraus, nämlich von dem einer nie dem Tode eines Sohnes ausgesetzten, der Keuschheit frönenden Jungfrau. Ava dagegen erzählt sich selbst in ihrem Text, benutzt ihr Schrifttum zur kathartischen Entlastung des von ihr persönlich Erlebten, wiederholt die von ihr allzu genau erfahrene Geschichte einer Mutter, die ihr Kind verliert, und der Verlust der Maria ist dabei ihr eigener Verlust.⁴⁹

Ich will aber meine Untersuchung nicht abschließen, ohne dem schon Gesagten eine kurze Reflexion anzuknüpfen. Schriftstellerisch aktive Frauen des deutschen Mittelalters können die nähere Verbindung, die zwischen Mütter und ihren Kindern besteht, sehr wohl mit Emotivität erleben, bewußt erlebnisnah beschreiben und dabei die bei ihnen entstandene Liebe in künstlerisch ergreifende Verse umsetzen. Liebe kann für diese Frauen außerdem der Auslöser des schriftlichen Aktes sein, ja seine Rechtfertigung, seine Finalität, nicht nur sein immer sich wiederholendes, zentrales Thema. Liebe—und von Liebe zu den eigenen Kindern und keiner anderen wird hier gesprochen—kann damit ihr Universum bestimmen, ihre Gedanken ausfüllen, ihre Seele beleben. Zumindest Ava hat uns dies zu beweisen versucht. Die Frage, ob dies auch für weitere Frauen des Mittelalters, die sich der Mutterschaft erfreuen konnten, zutreffend ist, bleibt vorläufig noch offen, sollte aber unumgänglich Thema für künftige Untersuchungen werden.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Roswitha von Gandersheim, *Werke*, *ibid.*, 65. Im Original "Haec ubi dicta dedit, conversus denique dixit / Ad matrem propriam mansueta voce Mariam: / Nec contristeris, rogitō, virguncula casta, / Cum me praecelsos videas ascendere caelos, / Te quia praeclaram mundi non linquo lucernam / Atque meum sanctum migrans non desero templum / Nec incorruptam vitae dimitto coronam, / inveni solam prae cunctis te quia castam / condignamque meum corpus generasse sacratum," *Hrosvithae Opera*, *ibid.* 87.

⁴⁹ Abaelard behandelt in seinem Gedicht an seinen Sohn Astralabe, *Carmen ad Astralabium*, genau den gleichen Aspekt der Mutterliebe, siehe dazu Juanita Feros Ruys' Beitrag zu diesem Band.

⁵⁰ Die weiteren Beiträge zu diesem Band liefern auf ihre Weise bereits vielfältige Bestätigung für die hier formulierte Hypothese, siehe besonders den Aufsatz von Mary Dzon.

Diane Peters Auslander

(Graduate Center, City University of New York)

Victims or Martyrs: Children, Anti-Judaism, and the Stress of Change in Medieval England

In 1144, in Norwich, England, a boy named William died under suspicious circumstances. His body was found on March 25, 1144, the Saturday of Easter week, in a place called Thorpe Wood. As we shall see, the death of a child was not particularly remarkable in twelfth-century Europe and, at first, the discovery of William's body resulted in no more of a reaction than mild curiosity among the local populace. Nevertheless, within a short time of his death, William, a twelve-year-old boy who, when alive, was an insignificant tanner's apprentice, had become a martyr and a saint with an active cult and a *vita* that consists of no less than seven books complete with a hagiographic version of William's life, descriptions of the translations of his body, and the requisite visions and miracles. The decisive factor in William's transformation from murder victim to sainted martyr was the accusation that he had been murdered by Jews.

The writings of Thomas of Monmouth transform this accusation from one of simple murder to one of ritual murder deliberately designed to mock and debase the most sacred Christian symbol: the crucifixion.¹ William of Norwich represents the first ritual murder accusation to appear in about seven centuries and it is only after William of Norwich that such accusations begin to appear with regularity all over Europe where they contributed to the increasingly violent anti-Judaism that has characterized most Jewish-Christian relations well into the modern period.² It

¹ For a discussion of the role of Thomas of Monmouth in the creation and promotion of the legend of William as a ritual murder victim see Gavin Langmuir, "Thomas of Monmouth: Detector of Ritual Murder," *Speculum* 59, 4 (1984): 820–46.

² A Greek historian of the fifth century, Socrates, tells the story of a group of Jews who engaged in celebratory sports in the town of Inmestar. On one such occasion, they became quite drunk and

is not surprising that academic scrutiny has mainly focused on the role of the ritual murder accusation in the history of anti-Judaism and/or the history of the relations between Christians and Jews in Western Europe. These accusations figured prominently in Christian concepts of Jews and contributed considerably to the dangers of being a Jew in a Christian world. This study will take another approach based on the belief that the success of these accusations was founded not only on hatred and fear of Jews, but also on the emotional appeal of the child victim. Just as Jean Jost's article in this volume, "Medieval Children: Treatment in Middle English Literature", demonstrates the emotional value and appeal of children in Middle English literature, this paper will show that this appeal, when adorned with the aura of Christian sanctity and martyrdom, had the power to move whole communities of people.

Beginning with a look at the sources and then proceeding to a consideration of the social and political context in England, and specifically Norwich, at this time I will attempt to recover something of the emotional atmosphere surrounding William's death. I will examine Christian attitudes toward children and the changes that began to develop in such attitudes during this period. Jewish attitudes toward children and childhood will also be considered along with a particular northern European Jewish ritual marking a child's first educational experience. It is hoped that this study of the social, cultural, political, and religious changes behind this first transformation of the child victim into the sainted martyr may shed some light on the forces behind changing concepts of childhood in this time and place.

The question as to why this event occurred in Norwich in 1144 and the arguments surrounding that question are important. Why did the death of a poor peasant child have such a powerful effect in an age when, it has been argued, childhood was not valued and the death of a child was a common and unremarkable occurrence? Ariès is the major instigator of this argument. He has stated that "... there was no place for childhood in the medieval world,"³ that childhood only

began to mock the Christians and Christ. They took a Christian child and hung him from a cross and ridiculed him. They got carried away and killed him by accident. This story is told in Thomas of Monmouth's *The Life and Miracles of William of Norwich*, Augustus Jessopp and Montague Rhodes James, ed. & trans. (1896), lxiii-lxiv. Jessopp and James express doubts that this story influenced the Norwich accusation (lxiv), and Langmuir denies any connection between the fifth century incident and the Norwich accusation, concluding that Norwich represents a completely independent creation (Langmuir, "Thomas of Monmouth: Detector of Ritual Murder," 822-825).

³ Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 33. For a critical examination of the modern scholarship from Ariès to the present, see Albrecht Classen's Introduction to this volume.

began to be discovered in the eighteenth century,⁴ and that people did not feel attached to small children because they were so vulnerable to accident and disease and could so quickly be gone. Much has been written to challenge and refute Ariès' conclusions. In the introduction to this volume, the editor states that the evidence refuting Ariès' views has reached critical mass indicating the development of a new paradigm for childhood in the Middle Ages. This evidence has been gathered by asking questions of a wide variety of sources, questions that attempt to get at emotional relationships within families in both public and private arenas. Nevertheless, medieval childhood is still poorly understood. It is not even entirely clear when childhood ends. Ariès claims that medieval childhood ended very early, but Mary Martin McLaughlin finds that young people were still considered children at the age of twelve if not beyond, a conclusion that the story of William of Norwich supports.⁵ In the sources, William's youth and vulnerability are emphasized, indicating that even a boy as old as twelve, already apprenticed to a trade and living away from home could be looked on as a child. It is hoped that this study will demonstrate that the emotional appeal of children extended beyond the age of the infant or the toddler and that, under the right circumstances, this appeal could have a powerful effect on people's behavior.

The foundation of the construction of William's sanctity as a martyr is Thomas of Monmouth's hagiographical text, the *Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich*.⁶ According to Gavin Langmuir, Thomas came to Norwich as a monk sometime after 1146 and before 1150 to serve in the Cathedral priory there. He became fascinated with William's story, and wrote the *Life* over a period of years between about 1149/50 and 1172/3.⁷ Langmuir argues that the *Life* was composed of the hearsay information available to Thomas when he began to investigate the incident, accounts of supposed eyewitnesses who came forward with their remembrances and revelations years after the discovery of the body. Thomas exaggerated and manipulated this information to make a case for ritual murder and the subsequent veneration of William as a martyred saint

⁴ Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* 47.

⁵ Mary Martin McLaughlin "Survivors and Surrogates: Children and Parents from the Ninth to Thirteenth Centuries" *The History of Childhood*, Lloyd de Mause, ed. (New York: Psychohistory Press, 1974), 101–82; here 110.

⁶ The full title of this work is *The Life and Miracles of St. William of Norwich by Thomas of Monmouth*, Now First Edited from the Unique Manuscript, with an Introduction, Translation and Notes by Augustus Jessopp and Montague Rhodes James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896), hereafter referred to as the *Life*. The unique manuscript referred to is Cambridge Library Additional 3037 and is the only extant copy of Thomas' work.

⁷ Langmuir, "Thomas of Monmouth," 820.

This life comprises seven books. The first book is the only one that recounts the events surrounding William's death. It also paints the picture of William as innocent victim: a picture vital to William's sanctity as a martyr. The other books are concerned with the construction of William as a powerful wonder-working saint performing miracles and appearing in visions; an image that contrasts with the boy's position in life as an insignificant tanner's apprentice. Throughout, there is no clear indication that the boy's sanctity was as widely accepted as Thomas would have us believe. The Norman authorities seem to have been the most stubborn in this regard as no punitive action was taken even against the Jews who figured most prominently in the accusation.

Although Thomas' *Life* represents the origin of medieval ritual murder accusations and the foundation upon which all future ritual murder accusations are based, the detailed and complete nature of his work indicates that there must have been a precedent for the *Life*. This precedent may be found in the fears and uncertainties concerning the vulnerability of children that had been circulating in popular folklore for some time.⁸ The circumstances surrounding the death of William created the perfect environment for the further development of this folklore and for incorporating the anxieties this folklore represented into the many other anxieties of the time to which Williams sanctification was one response.

William was one of several children born to a widow named Elviva who lived in a village just outside Norwich. Her father was a married priest valued for his ability to interpret dreams, a talent that may not have been appreciated by the Norman clerical authorities. Apparently William's father, Wenstan, had been a farmer who made a comfortable living. The widow's financial situation is not known, but as a widow with several children, it is possible she was impoverished. Elviva had a sister, Leviva, who was married to another priest, Godwin Sturt, and had a son named Alexander who was a deacon.

Married clergy would not have been entirely unusual in England at this time, but they most probably would have been operating at the margins of the ecclesiastical world. Marriage within clerical ranks had long been frowned upon by the church and, during the twelfth century, a concerted effort was being made to eliminate such anomalies. The famous story of Abelard and Heloise illuminates some of the tensions surrounding this issue. It is difficult to imagine that William's grandfather and uncle would have been accepted as equals by the more

⁸ For a discussion of folklore and the death of children, see Barbara A. Kellum, "Infanticide in England in the Later Middle Ages," *History of Childhood Quarterly. The Journal of Psychohistory* 1 (1974): 378-380. See also Marilyn Sandidge's article in this volume, "Changing Concepts of Childhood in Medieval English Texts."

mainstream local priests and bishops, especially since the Norman church was making a particularly vigorous attempt to regulate its clergy as well as its parishioners at this time.

William himself lived in the actual town of Norwich where he had been apprenticed to a tanner at the age of eight. Here he frequently encountered local Jews who brought their furs in to be repaired. Friends noted that William visited Jewish homes so often that both the man with whom he lived, Wolward, and his uncle Godwin forbade him to continue consorting with Jews. It is interesting to note William's living arrangements here. He has an aunt and uncle in Norwich, but stays with someone else. It is not clear whether Wolward is the tanner to whom he is apprenticed, but that may have been the case. It seems evident, however, that neither Wolward nor Godwin were able to effectively control the boy as William continued to visit the Jews despite their edict.⁹

The Monday after Palm Sunday, 1144, a man who said he was the Archbishop of Norwich's cook, stops William and offers him a job in his kitchen. William says he has to ask his mother and the two go off to seek her permission. According to the mother's statements made after the death of her son, she was reluctant to let him go, but changed her mind when the alleged cook offered her three shillings. The role of the distraught mother is an important one in these ritual murder accusations and Thomas of Monmouth struggles to accommodate this bribery to the image of a concerned parent. He likens the contest to the struggle of a wolf and a sheep over a lamb, finally stating that:

Verum quia alteri puer illectus favebat alteriusque sibi assensum incessanter supplicabat, mater tum crebris filii precibus convicta, tum bonis viri pollicitationibus seducta, domum assentire licet invita compellitur. Indutias tamen filio vel usque post pascha petiit: sed traditor pro triginta argenteis pueri per triduum carere presentia se nolle iuravit. Negat mater, et iurat se non ante pascha filium dimissuram. Traditor itaque tres solidos e marsupio trahit, quibus materne pietatis labefactaret affectum et inconstantem femine levitatis rigorem, argenti splendore corruptum, ad cupidi tatem deflecteret. Porrigitur argentum quasi muneris immo revera innocentis sanguinis precium. . . .¹⁰

⁹ An intriguingly parallel case exists with Herman of Cologne, a Jew, who did the same and eventually converted to Christianity (ed. Gerlinde Niemeyer, 1963; trans. Karl Morrison, *Conversion and Text: The Case of Augustine of Hippo, Herman-Judah, and Constantine Tsatsos* [Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1992], 76–113).

¹⁰ *Life*, 18–19. "But because the boy, being fascinated, favoured the one and kept on incessantly begging the consent of the other, the mother, partly overcome by her son's prayers and partly seduced by the man's fair promises, at last was compelled against her will to give way. She begged, however, for delay till after Easter; but the traitor swore he would not wait three days, not for thirty pieces of

Thomas successfully portrays William as betrayed, like Christ, for money, but the facts of the story do not allow him to turn Elviva into a type of Mary, as no doubt he would have liked to do. In fact, Elviva seems more like Eve as Thomas is forced to resort to standard topoi about the fickleness and cupidity of women in order to explain her acceptance of money for her son's life. It's possible that her taking of the money is indicative of extreme poverty or she may have been overwhelmed by having to take care of William's brothers and sisters by herself, although she is never shown with the other children. It is also possible that she was a negligent if not abusive mother anyway and was not as concerned as Thomas would have us think until she knew that William was dead and saw the commotion that his death engendered.

The description of the scene between the boy, the cook, and the mother also presents the child William as innocent and enthusiastic, eager for a new and exciting experience, but unaware of the evil that awaits him. This is an appealing and, no doubt, familiar picture of a child begging his mother for something he wants but should not have. Although, at this point, the more vicious betrayal of this innocent child is by his mother, Thomas likens the cook to Judas, saying "Mane itaque traditor ille, ac fore per omnia Iude traditoris imitator, cum puerum Norwicum regreditur. . ."¹¹ (In the morning accordingly that traitor, the imitator in almost everything of the traitor Judas, returns to Norwich with the boy. . .") However, Thomas's struggle to make Elviva conform to the role of the good mother like Mary, the mother of Christ, still falls short of the mark due, in main part, to her having taken the money and allowed him to go with the cook in the first place.

Back in Norwich, William and the alleged cook stop in at the aunt's house to tell her that Elviva has given William over to his care. Leviva senses something amiss and instructs her daughter to follow them. The daughter observes the man and boy entering a Jew's house. This is the last time William is seen alive. Despite all the misgivings and the report of the daughter that William not only did not go to the Archbishop's kitchen, but that he went instead to a house he had been strictly forbidden to enter, no-one checked up on him or showed undue alarm over the next few days.

silver. The mother refused to let him go, and vowed she would not let him go before Easter. So the traitor took three shillings from his purse with intent to get the better of the mother's fancy and to bend the fickle stubbornness of a fickle woman, seduced by the glitter of money to the lust of gain. Thus the money was offered as the price of the innocent's service, or rather in truth as the price of his blood. . . " (here and in every other citation from the *Life*, the translation is by Jessopp and James).

¹¹ *Life*, 19.

At the Jew's house, William is treated kindly for the first day and night. The next day, Passover, the Jews allegedly begin torturing William finally working up to the crucifixion and death. Thomas emphasizes William's innocence, referring to him as *agnus innocens* and *innocentis*. Thomas reports that the Jews chose William partly because he was of unusual innocence, but also because he was twelve, the age at which Christ's mother had to search for him, finally finding him in the temple.¹² William is also called a 'simple boy' with regard to his trust in the cook indicating that, although he was twelve, he was still unable to tell the truth from a lie and still required parental guidance.¹³ Immediately after his death he is referred to as "*gloriosus puer et martyr Christi*," the lamb led to the slaughter, the innocent Christian sacrificed for his faith.¹⁴ Thomas also describes the torture in gory detail, heightening the horror of the child's situation.

Sed necdum his torquentium exsaturari poterat crudellitas nisi et graviores superadderent penas. Capite etenim raso infinitis illud spinarum punctionibus vulnerant, invictisque vulneribus miserabiliter cruentant. . . .¹⁵

This makes it very plain that William is a surrogate for Christ in the eyes of both the Jews and the Christians. This image of William as the sacrificial lamb, the *innocentem victimam*, and its importance in relation to changing attitudes toward church sacraments and doctrine will be discussed below.

The next day the Jews try to smuggle the body out of town covered in a sack. Unable to find a suitable place to dump the body, they eventually hang it on a tree in Thorpe Wood. This is done on Good Friday. It takes a few days for the body to be discovered and when it is it is no longer hanging but lying at the foot of an oak. After this, several people come to the wood to view the dead child, but it is not until Monday that the body is buried in a makeshift grave. Eventually members of William's family, including Godwin Sturt, dig up the grave, have a look at the body and immediately rebury it in the same place. Thomas also tells us that Henry de Sprowston, one of those who had come to the wood to view the body, somehow deduced from the condition of the body and the type and position of the wounds that this murder could only have been committed by a Jew, although

¹² *Life*, 16.

¹³ *Life*, 17.

¹⁴ *Life*, 22.

¹⁵ *Life*, 32, "Having shaved his head, they stabbed it with countless thorn-points, and made the blood come horribly from the wounds they made. And cruel were they and so eager to inflict pain that it was difficult to say whether they were more cruel or more ingenious in their tortures. For their skill in torturing kept up the strength of their cruelty and ministered arms thereto."

Henry did not report this to anyone.¹⁶ Five years later, a man named Aelward made a deathbed confession that he had encountered the Jews carrying their sack on that day and, being suspicious, put his hand on the sack and felt a body. He did not bother to mention this to anyone at the time. In fact, there is no undue alarm whatsoever over this death at the time. No-one even brings the body into town for a Christian burial.

When the aunt finds out the manner of William's death, she suddenly recalls a dream in which her leg is torn off by Jews. It is strange that she did not remember this portentous dream when she learned that William had gone to the Jew's house. When William's mother hears of her son's death, she comes to town and runs through the streets screaming and crying out that the Jews have taken and murdered her son:

Ubi autem multorum relatu filium mortuum et in silva cognovit sepultum, continuo discerpitis crinibus, palmisque in invicem crebro connexis, flens et eiulans per plateas tanquam amens cursitabat. . . berunptamen ex multis et verisimilibus coniectuarum connici argumentis cognovit quoniam non christiani sed iudei revera essent, qui rem huiusmodi patrare aussu fuissent. Quibus illa facilitate muliebri fidem facile adhibuit; unde et statim in contumeliam iudeorum verbo, convitiis ac lite palam prorupit. Hinc nimirum ceu mater materno pietatis tangebatur affectu ; inde tanquam mulier muliebri ac temerario ferebatur ausu.. facto per vices et plateas discursu et materno compulsa dolore universos horrendis sollicitabat clamoribus iudeosque dilium dolo seductum sibi surripuisse protestabatur et occidesse.¹⁷

¹⁵ Various marks on William's body, which was left exposed in the woods for several days, were said to represent Jewish attempts to imitate the tortures inflicted on the body of Christ; the pricks of thorns on the head, the wound in the side etc.

¹⁷ *Life*, 41–42: "But when she learnt by the relation of many people that her son was dead and was buried in the wood—immediately with torn hair and clapping of hand she ran from one to another weeping and wailing through the streets like a mad woman. At last going to the house of her sister whom I mentioned before and enquiring now of the priest Godwin, now of her sister, she could learn no more about the circumstances and the truth than that he had been slain in an extraordinary way. But from many probable indications and conclusions she was convinced that they were not Christians but Jews who had dared to do the deed. With a woman's readiness of belief she easily gave credence to these conjectures. Whereupon she at once burst forth into denouncing the Jews—with words of contumely and indignation. Sometimes she behaved like a mother moved by all a mother's love, sometimes she bore herself like a woman with all a woman's passionate rashness. And so, assuming everything to be certain which she suspected and asserting it to be a fact, as though it had actually been seen—she went through the streets an open places and, carried along by her motherly distress, she kept calling upon everybody with dreadful screams, protesting that the Jews had seduced and stolen away from her son and killed him."

Thomas tells us that everyone in town is affected by the distraught mother, believing her claim, and beginning to clamor for the destruction of the Jews. Despite Elviva's inability to conform to an image of Marian motherhood, the portrayal of her grief and hysteria in Thomas's text creates an emotional reaction among the townfolk that is integral to the effectiveness of the ritual murder accusation. Nevertheless, Elviva's role in William's disappearance damages her moral standing thus marking an important difference between the first form of the myth and the more developed form represented by the story of Hugh of Lincoln. Hugh's mother, Beatrice, realizes he is missing almost immediately and starts searching for him right away and, from the information she gathers, she and the others who have been alerted by her search, immediately suspect the Jews:

Mulier quidem, hujus sancti mater . . . expavit continuo, et festinanter eundem per notos vicinos et amicos requirebat. Quo non reperto assertionem infantum cum quibus ludere consuevit, ostensis hora diei et loco ubi eum ultimo viderunt et reliquerunt, orta est suspicio venemens inter Christianos, ipsum a Judaeis sublatum et interemptum.¹⁸

Unlike Elviva, Beatrice is called *sancti mater* because she conforms more readily to a type of Mary particularly as she appears in Luke 2.40–44 where she searches Jerusalem anxiously for the missing twelve-year-old Jesus.

From the time of William's death until 1255, the date of Little Hugh of Lincoln's death, several other ritual murder accusations were made in England and northern France.¹⁹ In 1168, the child Harold of Gloucester was said to have been ritually murdered by the Jews of that city. Sometime before 1171, another such accusation resulted in the creation of a shrine to young Richard of Pontoise in Paris. In France, in 1171, thirty-one Jews were burned at the stake for the murder of a child whose body was never even found. In 1181, a child named Robert had a shrine in his honor at Bury St. Edmonds for allegedly having been murdered secretly by Jews. In 1202 in Lincoln, the body of a child was found dead outside the walls and suspicion centered on the Jews. In fact, the myth of Jewish child murder had

¹⁸ *Annales Monastici* Vol. I, H.R. Luard, ed. (Rolls Series, London 1864–9), 341–342 (also known as the Burton Annals, henceforth referred to as the Annals). "The same woman, his blessed mother. . . having found no sign of him among the children with whom he was accustomed to play, the time of day and place where they had last seen him and left him being made known, a strong suspicion arose among the Christians that he had been taken and killed by the Jews" (all translations from the Annals are my own.)

¹⁹ The following list of ritual murder accusations is taken from Gavin Langmuir, "The Knight's Tale of Young Hugh of Lincoln," *Speculum* 47, 3 (1972): 459–82; here 462–3.

become so pervasive that there was a "predisposition to accuse Jews whenever a child was missing or a child's body was found. . . ." ²⁰

The sources present these children as victims of the Jews and martyrs to their own faith. Recent scholarship, however, has amply demonstrated that accusations of ritual murder are pure myth. ²¹ Thus these children would seem to be actually simple victims of mischance or of random violence at the hands of unknown perpetrators who may not necessarily have been strangers. It is possible that they were more than ordinary victims. Perhaps they really were martyrs, not in the traditional sense, but as sacrifices to the inexorable forces of change: the extensive and pervasive changes that organized and disrupted Northern European society in the twelfth century. For the community of Norwich, the Norman invasion of 1066 was undoubtedly one of the most disruptive of these changes.

Young William's death occurred seventy-eight years after the Norman Conquest of England. When that other William, the Duke of Normandy, defeated the forces of Harald Godwinson, he shattered the Anglo-Saxon world forever. The violence of the Conquest and the suppression of almost constant rebellions during William I's reign were severe. The raping, the pillaging, the devastation of the countryside, and the displacing of the Anglo-Saxon elite created what Hugh Thomas calls an "ethnic hostility" that effected all levels of native English society. ²² According to Thomas "English society in the late eleventh century was permeated by awareness of ethnic difference, and of the contrast between the English and the Normans." ²³ The Normans were the conquering elite. Everything from their language to their architecture marked them as different and, in their own eyes at any rate, superior. ²⁴ In Norwich, the Normans constructed a castle soon after the Conquest. Built in the center of the town for the purpose of controlling the local populace, its construction necessitated the destruction of ninety-eight homes that had belonged to burgesses of the town, a displacement not calculated to ease tensions between the townspeople and their new overlords. ²⁵ The castle opened onto a new French

²⁰ Gavin Langmuir, "The Knight's Tale," 463.

²¹ See particularly R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Langmuir, "Thomas of Monmouth: Detector of Ritual Murder;" and Gavin Langmuir, "The Knight's Tale."

²² Hugh M. Thomas, *The English and the Normans: Ethnic Hostility, Assimilation, and Identity 1066–c.1220* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 58–59.

²³ Ibid., 46.

²⁴ For a detailed and thorough analysis of the effect of the Norman Conquest on Norwich and William's role in that context see Jeffrey J. Cohen, "The Flow of Blood in Medieval Norwich," *Speculum* 79, 1 (2004): 26–65.

²⁵ Unless otherwise noted, the facts regarding the town of Norwich during this period is from Alsford,

quarter of town complete with its own market apart from and in opposition to the old native part of town and its market. Stephen Alsford calls this part of "a broader Norman policy of deliberate colonization of Anglo-Saxon centers (although the establishment of a separate but adjacent Norman quarter was itself rare)."²⁶

This new section of town, called Mancroft, paid minimal customary dues so that merchants would be attracted to it. The new market held a monopoly on the castle's business and soon eclipsed the old native market where higher dues were levied. The Normans enjoyed special privileges and greater access to power and wealth. All these factors contributed to an atmosphere of divisiveness. By 112, enough Saxon rebellions had been put down to demonstrate amply the futility of such armed attempts at redressing wrongs and obtaining what the English natives perceived as justice, yet these wrongs and injustices still rankled too much to allow for healing and assimilation. At this point another new element is added to the mix: the Jews.

Thomas of Monmouth's account of the alleged martyrdom of young William is the first evidence we have of a Jewish community in Norwich and it is probable that they hadn't been settled there for more than ten years when William's body was found. The position of Jews in medieval society was unique. They were dependents of the crown, protected and privileged on the one hand and vulnerable to attack and subject to the royal whim on the other. David Nirenberg describes it thus:

In some way this close relationship to the monarchy resulted in increased acculturation, since participation in royal service involved a number of Jews in Christian social and political structures. But it also isolated the Jews, since it forced them to depend almost entirely on the king. . . .²⁷

The Jews were another new and alien group disrupting the local inhabitants; a group, moreover, that was historically constructed as enemies of Christians and of all that was, theoretically, good and decent in the Christian world. In Norwich, a town with a recent history of competing ethnic groups and in an ambiguous

Stephen, "History of Medieval Norwich" <http://www.trytel.com/~tristan/towns/norwich3.html>, created February 28, 200; it was last updated on September 20, 1999 (last accessed on March 14, 2005). (Alsford is affiliated with the Canadian Museum of Civilization. He completed his MPhil at Leicester University in Medieval English urban history. He is the creator of this web site that provides histories of medieval cities and towns).

²⁶ Ibid., 2-3. "History of Medieval Norwich."

²⁶ David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence, Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 28.

position between rebellion and assimilation, the Jews stood out for their isolation, the cohesion of their community, the foreignness of their religious practices, their reputed role in Christian history, and their enjoyment of special privileges and a special relationship to the king.²⁸ I would like to suggest here that accusations of ritual murder against the Jews arose around this child, William, in this place, Norwich, for reasons having to do with tensions between power and helplessness. Configuring William as an innocent child martyred for the Christian faith provided the oppressed Saxons with an authoritative language through which they could express their grievances.²⁹

According to Nirenberg, accusations against Jews could be "used in novel ways to resist evolving royal power and to further jurisdictional conflicts."³⁰ Norman royal power in the twelfth century was organizing and centralizing in ways similar to French royal government in the fourteenth century. Jews thus represented a Norman overlordship that was trying to absorb and regulate its disparate ethnicities; but the Jews themselves were only on the margins of the Norman community, not a true part of it. Existing in this state between inclusion and exclusion, the Jews provided a perfect target for those wanting to strike at their oppressors without fear of overly harsh retribution.

William, too, was in a liminal state between child and adult, a state that both children and adults still find confusing. On the one hand he was learning a trade and living apart from his family but the other he could be constructed as a helpless innocent in the hands of powerful foreigners. In this construction, William and his mother represented the helpless natives abused by the great Normans who had power over them. Judging from their names, William's family, those who instigated the accusation against the Jews, were all members of the old native community.³¹ The clerical establishment to whom Godwin Sturt brought the charge was mainly Norman. Hugh Thomas believes that Godwin was one of the native clerics who helped integrate Norman and Saxon because he "was able to get episcopal support for accusations against the Jews in a local synod."³² The fact that Godwin actually got very little support for his accusations would seem to negate this conclusion, however, and support the view that the Saxon natives had little

²⁸ For discussion of the Jewish community in Northern Europe and its privileges, see Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, "The 'Northern' European Jewish Community and its Ideals" *Jewish Society Through the Ages*, eds., Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson and Samuel Ettinger (1969; New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 208–219.

²⁹ Once again I refer to Jeffrey Cohen "The Flow of Blood in Norwich," 26–65

³⁰ David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence* 93.

³¹ Hugh M. Thomas *The English and the Normans* 309.

³² *Ibid.*, 226.

influence on Norman authorities. It was a fellow Norman, Thomas of Monmouth, who succeeded in gaining support for William's martyrdom. Ethnic hostilities may have been part of the reason why it took so long for the Norman establishment to be converted to belief in William's sanctity.

R. B. Dobson suggests that the massacre of Jews in York in 1190 was an expression of political protest against the Angevins, saying that "it was the Jews who had to pay the harshest price for the unpopularity of the royal government whose purposes they served."³³ It is interesting to note here that Dobson also concludes that many of the participants in the 1190 massacre were poor, unbeneficed urban priests, a description that seems to fit Godwin Sturt.³⁴ Perhaps Godwin and his family felt they had been unfairly treated by the Norman clerical hierarchy. Perhaps William, because he is presented as the embodiment of the helplessness and vulnerability of childhood, was also seen as a surrogate for the helpless Anglo-Saxons in general and for William's family in particular. Godwin could have been trying, perhaps subconsciously, to get justice for the oppressed group in the only way he could, by attacking the vulnerable and universally distrusted minions of the oppressors, oppressors who were themselves too powerfully entrenched to approach directly.

Although Thomas of Monmouth's efforts to promote Godwin's suit on William's behalf was not, at first, successful, Godwin himself was not claiming sainthood for William, he was just accusing the Jews of the boy's murder. Years later, when Thomas of Monmouth began his investigation and his hagiography, the clerical hierarchy began to see the possible spiritual and financial benefits of having a martyred saint around. This is when the charge against the Jews became a declaration of William's martyrdom. It took years for the cult to flourish, but when it did it brought benefits to the whole town. It especially benefitted William's own family.³⁵ The emotional appeal of the Christ-like image of the young child tortured at the hands of the Jews painted by Thomas complete with miracles and visions transformed William into a saint whose power and fame went a long way toward redressing the power imbalances between Norman and Saxon. Only after this

³³ R. B. Dobson *The Jews of Medieval York and the Massacre of York 1190*. Borthwick Papers, 45 (York: St. Anthony's Press, 1974), 36–37.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁵ For evidence of the benefits accruing to William's family see John M. McCulloh "Jewish Ritual Murder: William of Norwich, Thomas of Monmouth and the Early Dissemination of the Myth," *Speculum* 72, 3 (1997): 698–740; here 735–736, where we are told that William's brother, Robert became a monk in the Norwich monastery, Elviva became closely associated with the monastery and was buried there, and Godwin enriched himself by renting out the supposed instruments of William's torture as healing relics.

image was firmly in the community's collective consciousness could William serve as a symbol of the commonality of the two Christian groups.

In discussing his theory that Thomas of Monmouth's fabrication of the crucifixion charge was the sole justification for William's sainthood, Langmuir generalizes about such accusations, saying:

If an innocent boy of twelve was crucified by Jews. . . for no other reason than that he was a Christian, that he was a symbol of Christ's truth; he would seem Christ in microcosm. He would also seem a representative of all those who felt defenseless as a child against the little-understood forces that menaced their existence, and who turned for comfort to their faith that Christ might intervene here and now or at least ensure them a better life hereafter. Only a little imagination was needed to make William a symbol of comfort and ultimate victory. . .³⁶

Thus, under these circumstances, children come to symbolize both cultural insecurity, fear, and vulnerability and a kind of promise of triumph in the life to come. The community of Norwich was working out internal strife by strengthening and focusing its antipathy toward a common enemy, the Normans, by attacking their minions, the Jews through the battered sacrificial body of a helpless, innocent child.

The detailed descriptions of the tortures to which the victims of alleged ritual murder were subjected and the references to the tenderness, innocence, and size of the victims by using words like *puerulum* and *parvulum* were calculated to evoke the requisite emotional response that would solidify the ethnically divided Christian community, bringing the marginalized natives, particularly the poor, into the secure circle of a communal identity. The image of William's mother, Elviva, running frantically through the town rallying the community to her support until "they all cried out with one voice that all the Jews ought to be destroyed" (*omnes acclamabatur vocibus omnes radicitus debere destrui Judeos*) bolsters the impression of communal identity. In William's case material benefits accrued to William's family, but the intangible benefit of forming, however, tentatively, a Christian identity that included both Normans and Saxons in opposition to the Jews would have widespread consequences. We must now look at the changing attitudes toward children that enabled them to hold such a central position in Christian ideology.

The twelfth century was a period of change in all areas of life: social, political, intellectual, economic, and religious. In the religious sector the changes were mainly in attitudes, emphases, and an invigorated enforcement of long-held

³⁶ Ibid., 845.

policies and doctrines. These changes fueled the gradual transformation of attitudes toward mistreatment of children that began in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Changes in attitudes toward the sacrament of the Eucharist coupled with emphasis on different aspects of the nature of Christ helped promote this transformation. However, we do have many medieval examples of loving relationships between parents and children, as Classen demonstrates in his introduction to this volume, and I would argue that these changes in the import of the Eucharist would not have taken effect if children had not already been the focus of strong emotional bonds.

The Eucharist is a re-enactment and a reminder of God's sacrifice of his only son. The two aspects of Christ, the adult Christ crucified on the cross and the Christ child sacrificed to the mortality of the flesh, were consistently merged in the Middle Ages.³⁷ From the late eleventh century, the church began to highlight the sacrifice by emphasizing Christ's suffering and humanity. The most effective way to do this was through the emotionally appealing image of Christ as a small child. Bernard of Clairvaux, inspired by a vision of the Christ child when Bernard was but a child himself, was one important twelfth-century cleric who wrote and spoke about the child as representative of the human weakness of Christ.³⁸ The emotions of pity and tenderness that this focus on the child were meant to evoke were intended to purify the individual man or woman through their own tears and suffering. Bernard encouraged Christians "to be converted to the little child so that they might learn 'to be a little child.'"³⁹ Images in art and in liturgy brought the tender appeal of mother and child to the forefront of Christian ideology and added to the increasing importance of the infancy and childhood of Christ. The many Madonna and Child images that proliferated in the twelfth century and beyond emphasize the tender concern of the mother and the helplessness and innocence of the child.⁴⁰

The idea that the host in the mass not only represented but actually became the body of Christ was increasingly emphasized and enforced as doctrine during this period. Beginning in the twelfth century or even earlier, the church began to arrange the mass so that it focused more and more centrally on the actual sight of the host. Thus developed the rite of elevation in which the priest lifted the host

³⁷ Leah Sinangoglou, "The Christ Child as Sacrifice: A Medieval Tradition and the Corpus Christi Plays," *Speculum* 48 (1973): 491–501; here 491.

³⁸ For a more complete discussion of Bernard of Clairvaux and the new emphasis on Jesus's childhood see Albrecht Classen's Introduction to this volume.

³⁹ Mary Martin McLaughlin "Survivors and Surrogates," 133.

⁴⁰ See the contribution by Eva Parra Membrives to this volume.

high above his head so that the congregation could see and venerate it. Christians were encouraged to try to actually see the Christ as a child in the host. Many miracles and visions centered on such sightings.

In the mid-eleventh century, King Edward the Confessor while taking Mass at Westminster saw a child in the host who gave him a blessing. Other visions of the Christ child were vouchsafed to those who had trouble believing in the miracle of the Eucharist. These sightings strengthened the faith of the doubting and stories of these experiences were circulated to encourage belief. Often the stories are quite violent and bloody not unlike the descriptions of the tortures in the ritual murder accusations. Leah Sinanoglou describes the vision of an Egyptian monk who cannot bring himself to believe that the sacramental bread is actually Christ's body. In his vision he sees the body of a child on the altar where the bread had been placed and:

As the priest stretched out his hand to break the bread, an angel of God came down from heaven and stabbed the child with a knife, catching His blood in a chalice. When the priest broke the bread into small pieces, the angel cut up the Boy's limbs. The doubting monk went forward to partake of the Sacrament, and was given bleeding flesh, whereupon he cried out, 'Lord, I believe that the bread laid on the altar is Thy Body and the chalice Thy Blood.'⁴¹

This bloody image serves to confirm the truth of the miracle of the Mass and it integrates the dissidents, the disbelievers, into the heart of the Christian community. Bloody descriptions of William's torture may have done the same for the local community of Norwich.

Sinanoglou points out that there are many stories of this type of vision being vouchsafed to Jews who are subsequently converted to Christianity. For example "a Jew seeking to test Christian claims of the Real Presence attended Mass, saw 'an infant torn limb from limb in the hands of St. Basil' and was Christianized with all his family."⁴² Doubting monks and Jews are good examples of the power of the image of the child/host to convert. It is important to keep in mind that people in twelfth-century England may not have been as far from their pagan roots as the church would like and so images with the power to convert would have been useful.

Children were often the recipients of these visions. Sinanoglou suggests that this may have been because children were seen as innocent and simple.⁴³ They are able

⁴¹ Leah Sinanoglou "The Christ Child as Sacrifice," 492.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 493.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 492.

to see through to the 'truth' because of their purity. That children related personally to the child they saw in the host may be supposed from the story of the child who would not go up to the priest after Mass because "he had just seen Father Peter devour a little child on the chapel altar and feared a like fate for himself."⁴⁴ Such stories could conflate real children with the child on the sacrificial altar in the minds of adults as well and emotions felt for the poor dismembered Christ child who sacrificed himself for their salvation could easily be transferred to the abused body of a murdered child found in a nearby wood

The images of the bloody, dismembered body of the Christ child that lay at the heart of Christian ritual evoked more than feelings of compassion and pity. In his book, *The Other Middle Ages*, Michael Goodich cites Alan Dundes' conclusion that Christians felt enormous guilt at what he calls "the symbolic cannibalism of the Eucharist service, in which the body and blood of Christ are ceremonially consumed as a way of achieving unity with God and of expressing membership in the community of believers."⁴⁵ He suggests that this guilt was displaced into blood libel and ritual murder charges against the Jews. It is not an unlikely supposition and may be applied to more than guilt over consumption of the host.

Mothers like Elviva and Beatrice who had lost track of their children, or perhaps even abused or neglected them themselves, or other members of the families who may have felt responsible, like Godwin and Leviva Sturt, would have been affected by the child/Christ/host image and its concomitant emphasis on the tender and nurturing mother. Grief over their own child combined with the guilt over their failings as mothers or caretakers would have been impetus enough to try to find someone to blame or some way to give their child's death greater meaning, especially in light of new ideas about parental responsibility.

Parental responsibility may be an important factor in another ritual in which pity for murdered children and horror at the sacrilege of the slaughter can be found: the feast of the Holy Innocents.⁴⁶ This feast celebrates the massacre of the infant boys born near the time of Jesus' birth as a result of Herod's fear of the newborn king whose birth had been foretold to him. These children were presumably Jewish, but the doctrine concerning this incident emphasizes their association with Christ, that they were sacrificed for his sake and that, therefore,

⁴⁴ Ibid., 492.

⁴⁵ Michael Goodich, ed., *Other Middle Ages: Witnesses at the Margins of Medieval Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 9.

⁴⁶ See Jean Jost's article in this volume for further information on the importance of the emotions evoked by the death of children to Christian ideology especially with regard to the Slaughter of the Innocents.

they were baptized in their own sacrificial blood.⁴⁷ According to Paul Hayward, church rhetoric emphasizes the suffering of these infants, an emphasis that has led to the conclusion that the church was trying to encourage a higher more loving standard of parenthood evoked by the natural sympathy felt for abused, suffering children.⁴⁸

An important aspect of the cult in this regard is the image of the children being torn from their mother's arms. Hayward cites Chrysologus as saying that: "the mothers suffered in the martyrdoms of their sons. . . thus it is inevitable that they will be consorts in their reward, as they were companions in their passion."⁴⁹ Echoes of this image are heard in the ritual murder stories where pains are taken to show the suffering of both mother and child and the mothers attain a kind of reflected sanctity of their own. This can be seen as another aspect of the pattern that conforms to the image of Christ and his mother who shared in the suffering of her son and in his subsequent glory.

One final point regarding the Holy Innocents concerns their contribution to conceptions of sanctity under discussion here. According to Chrysologus: "... the combination of their incapacity as infants and their sanctification is certain proof that sanctity is not earned by merit, but conferred by grace alone. For there is no *voluntas* or *arbitrium* in small boys: in them *natura* is held captive."⁵⁰ This provides a justification for the sanctification even of boys like William and Hugh who were beyond the age of what we would consider infancy and were presumably already baptized. Also, it can be suggested that the influence of the rhetoric surrounding the cult of the Holy Innocents regarding the belief that boys in particular could be thought of as in a kind of natural state of grace might contribute to the guilt of parents or even of communities wherein the body of a brutalized young boy was found.

This is especially true in light of the belief expressed by Jacob de Voragine in his explanation as to why the Holy Innocents was one of only two Old Testament saints' feasts honored in the Western Church. Voragine said that: "... exception is made for the Innocents 'in each of whom Christ himself is slain.'"⁵¹ According

⁴⁷ Shulamith Shahar, "The Boy Bishop's Feast: a Case-Study in Church Attitudes Towards Children in the High and Late Middle Ages" *The Church and Childhood*, ed. Diana Wood (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994), 240-60; here 244.

⁴⁸ Hayward, Paul, "Suffering and Innocence in Latin Sermons for the Feast of the Holy Innocents" *The Church and Childhood* 1994, 67.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁵¹ Shulamith Shahar "The Boy Bishop's Feast," 244.

to R. Po-Chia Hsia, children like William and Hugh represented the innocence of the Christian community before God.

As a sacrament of peace, the partaking of the eucharist represented a ritual of communal harmony and Christian solidarity, and the children of a Christian community symbolized its innocence before God. What greater sacrilege could be committed against divinity and community when Christian children, martyrs like Christ, were kidnapped and slaughtered?⁵²

It is ironic that while the ritual murder of a child was the greatest sacrilege, it was at the same time the greatest honor that an insignificant child such as William could play the role of Christ as the sacrificial martyr to the cause of "communal harmony and Christian solidarity." The Holy Innocents became the first Christian martyrs because of their chronological and geographical proximity to Christ and because they died in his stead.⁵³ Herod was a dependant of the Roman overlords just as the Norwich Jews were dependents of the Norman king and his murder of the Innocents of Bethlehem can be seen as a prefiguring not only of the belief that Jews killed Christian boys, but also of the political implications of such charges.

Child martyrs had a particular importance in Anglo-Saxon England.⁵⁴ The Anglo-Saxon period saw several kings and princes murdered while still children. Although these young boys were all murdered for political reasons by those seeking to grasp royal power from the hands of a weak and vulnerable child, they were thought of as martyrs because their deaths were thought to have been analogous to the death of Christ.⁵⁵ The Anglo-Saxon cults of these royal children were probably instigated and perpetuated by the laity.⁵⁶ As part of their effort to maintain continuity and order in the English monasteries, Norman monastics made a point of adapting Anglo-Saxon saints to their own needs by rewriting their hagiographies and reviving their cults. The lives of the six young Anglo-Saxon royal martyrs were reworked in Norman monasteries from about 1050 to about 1130 and would have been widely circulated by 112.⁵⁷ Like St. William, none of the young princes are infants or even toddlers. They are all boys or what we today

⁵² R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder*, 12.

⁵³ Paul Hayward "Suffering and Innocence," 77.

⁵⁴ See the Introduction to this volume for a more general discussion of children in Anglo-Saxon England.

⁵⁵ Hayward, Paul, "The Idea of Innocent Martyrdom in Late Tenth- and Eleventh-Century English Hagiology," *Martyrs and Martyrologies*, ed. Diana Wood. Studies in Church History, 30 (London: Boydell and Brewer, 1993), 81–152; here 81.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 82.

would call adolescents, and Hayward posits that their sanctity has been reinterpreted to a substantial degree by the eleventh- and twelfth-century monks so that, even though they are princes and kings presumably surrounded and protected by the trappings of power, it is the helplessness of their youth that is emphasized.⁵⁸ Hayward states that: ". . . the significant thing about all of them is the way in which they interpret their subject's death and manner of living. Much is made of the saints' youth. . . and this is associated with a singular emphasis on the saints' physical and mental purity."⁵⁹ In addition, the most important element in their purity is that they maintained it through celibacy; celibacy being a central ingredient in the construction of the medieval conception of childhood as a time of innocence and an integral component in their natural state of grace.⁶⁰ These qualities apply equally, if not more particularly, to William who was not a king or prince and was not born at the same time and in the same town as Jesus. Moreover, Hayward points out that "these saints are not innocent martyrs because they died blameless deaths, but because their guiltless deaths, miracles, and youth prove that they were pure and innocent."⁶¹ These are the same elements that go into the image of innocence and sanctity constructed for young William.

While William's story owes something to the legends of Anglo-Saxon royal child martyrs, his status marks him as part of a new trend in the making of martyrs that began to take hold in the twelfth century. That is, the development among the laity of the creation of martyrs from among the most humble and insignificant members of society. As Miri Rubin says:

Here is a sort of popular understanding of martyrdom, one which identified that supreme sacrifice in the suffering of the virtuous, of the pure, of the good, in sufferings undeserved, unmerited, and wantonly inflicted. . . innocence sullied, purity misunderstood, created not only sympathy, but a drive to remedy this breach of the cosmic order in acts of expiation through veneration and posthumous loving and tender care for the 'martyr' . . . once recognized as a martyr's death, that death is made into a significant marker: of one group as opposed to another, we and they, Christian and pagans, or . . . righteous villagers and misguided lord.⁶²

⁵⁸ Ibid., 85.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 83.

⁶⁰ It must be noted that not only was there an awareness that this innocence was fragile and could be easily corrupted (Ibid., 88), but also that not even in the monastic world was there a consensus on childhood as a state of innocence. Depending on who you read, children could also be portrayed as devious and wicked. (personal communication from Paul Hayward).

⁶¹ Paul Hayward "The Idea of Innocent Martyrdom," 84.

⁶² Miri Rubin, "Choosing Death? Experiences of Martyrdom in Late Medieval Europe," *Martyrs and Martyrologies*, ed. Diana Wood (London: Boydell and Brewer, 1993), 153–83; here 162.

The story of our young martyr can be seen in this light as an example both of this popular understanding in its evocation of sympathy and of its role as a focus for expiation. Whether his death was seen as a wrong in itself or represented, as is more probable, a host of wrongs that had long gone unacknowledged, William bruised body provided an outlet for an oppressed group to express their pain and to unite, eventually, with the oppressors against a common enemy.

Rubin posits that what she calls "the most powerful area of affective anxiety" centered on concern for children and that the murder of a child created the most insistent call for the recognition of martyrdom from the people.⁶³ She uses the case of William of Norwich and the subsequent rash of ritual murder accusations as examples of this suggesting that such charges eased anxieties about Jews and their strange behaviors.⁶⁴ I agree with Cohen that they relieved tensions about events and conflicts within the Christian community as well. Establishment of these cults without, or perhaps in spite of, ecclesiastical approval at a time when the church was making progress at controlling and regulating saints' cults demonstrates how strongly these children appealed to the populace. A look at changing ideas of childhood in the secular world may shed more light on the milieu in which such popular enthusiasm flourished.

There is ample evidence to show that death of children from accidents, abuse, neglect, or infanticide was common in the Middle Ages. Accidents occurring to children of William's age may have been more of the child's own making, but they would still have been subject to disease or violence and abuse from parents, other family members, teachers, guardians, or masters to whom they were apprenticed.⁶⁵ Zefira Entin Rokeah has found evidence of a number of deaths of older children that give no indication of the cause of death.⁶⁶ The case of William or of the other children whose bodies were found in mysterious circumstances would not then have been unusual or distinguished in any way except for the charges that were made against the Jews. Rokeah says that the fact that Christians had come to accept the accidental, deliberate, or unnatural death of children as a natural part of their cultural experience, may have encouraged the belief that Jews would kidnap and kill Christian children.⁶⁷ It was even not unusual or unlawful for poor

⁶³ Ibid., 164.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 165.

⁶⁵ Zefira Entin Rokeah, "Unnatural Death Among Christians and Jews in Medieval England," *History of Childhood Quarterly. The Journal of Psychohistory* 18, 2 (1990): 181–226; here 195.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 196.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 206.

parents to sell their children into slavery or give them over to serfdom when they needed money or could no longer feed them.⁶⁸

There was, however, ambiguity among the laity regarding the unnatural deaths of these children. On the one hand, the poor battered little bodies evoked strong emotional reactions of pity and compassion that galvanized communities to action, enhanced the spiritual authority of the poor and marginalized, and brought disparate groups together in opposition to a perceived enemy. On the other hand, such deaths were commonplace and unremarkable and rarely prosecuted. Nevertheless, by the early twelfth century a new and more caring official awareness of children was making itself felt. In the beginning of the twelfth century, the secular authorities began to introduce legislation regarding the death of children. This first legislation only covered suffocation by a teacher or nurse or someone other than the parent, but the punishment was the same as that for murder of an adult.⁶⁹ This legal action would have been part of the increasingly forceful efforts to centralize governmental control in England and to claim legal jurisdiction in areas that had been previously covered by the church. It also indicates a growing effort to enforce parental responsibility. Limited as this legislation was, it would have demonstrated an official interest in the welfare of children and pointed out that there were at least intended consequences for harming them.

Admittedly it was fueled and spread by ecclesiastical liturgy and the ideas of such monastic scholars as Anselm and Bernard of Clairvaux. Nevertheless, these new ideas were popularized in art and in feasts and cults such as those of the martyred Anglo-Saxon princes and the Holy Innocents. They were also communicated in images of the Virgin and child and in sermons.⁷⁰ This new ideology emphasized the dangers to the soul as well as the body of infanticide and child neglect and insinuated into people's minds the idea that their children were gifts from God and not possessions to do with as they pleased. These developments would have increased the guilt and anxiety over the deaths of children especially in communities such as Norwich that were already experiencing a good deal of tension and stress. There was a gap for Christians between the ideology of childhood and the reality of actual children's lives and deaths, but the very existence of the ideology expressed in so many forms put new ideas in people's minds, ideas that brought new fears and guilt about the commonplace occurrence

⁶⁸ Mary Martin McLaughlin "Survivors and Surrogates," 121.

⁶⁹ Barbara Kellum, "Infanticide in England in the Later Middle Ages," 373; see also "Changing Concepts of Infanticide in Medieval English Texts" by Marilyn Sandidge in the present volume.

⁷⁰ Mary Martin McLaughlin "Survivors and Surrogates," 132-135.

of childhood death—a reality at odds with the ideals of a Christian society. But what about the reality and ideals of the Jewish community?

The Jewish ideal was that of a tight-knit community united in faith, living according to the laws of their religion, ever mindful of their identity as God's chosen people. In reality, they lived in small, scattered communities struggling to survive within a hostile group with a different faith, different rituals, and different cultural assumptions and behaviors.⁷¹ The Jews in England were doubly isolated because of their close association with the French-speaking Norman aristocracy. Most Jews were poor, but "all were bound together by their religion and their condition and none had any other purpose in England than to subserve the interests of the king and the rulers in Church and State."⁷² The tensions felt by Jews in smaller urban areas such as Norwich, somewhat removed from the immediate protection of the king and rife with tensions of its own, must have been enormous.

It is as difficult to get at Jewish family values during this period as it is to understand such Christian values as they played out in day-to-day life. We can, however, look at some attitudes toward children within the Jewish community. Rokeah uses legal sources, particularly the eyre rolls, for information in her article on unnatural child death in medieval England. With regard to Jewish children she states that:

I have not found cases in these records of Jews being involved with the death of children from fire, from scalding, through overlaying, or from animals. Nor, with the possible exception of the drowned Sampson son of Josceus, do I know of any case where in a Jew was associated with the accidental death of a Jewish child.⁷³

It is hard to believe that the Jewish children in medieval England were completely protected from the common dangers of the time, nevertheless, it is equally implausible that, given the emotional atmosphere at the time, had there been any evidence at all for the involvement of Jewish parents in the unnatural deaths of their children there wouldn't have been accusations and official records of court proceedings or ecclesiastical investigations.

Rokeah cites evidence that demonstrates that emotional bonds within Jewish families were extremely strong.⁷⁴ These bonds would have been made even stronger by the dangers these isolated families faced from the hostile Christian

⁷¹ Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, "The Northern European Jewish Community and its Ideal," 1969, 218, and H. G. Richardson, *The English Jewry Under Angevin Kings* (London: Methuen, 1960), 5.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷³ Zefirah Entin Rokeah "Unnatural Child Death," 205.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 205.

communities in which they lived. She also finds that Jewish parents had a deep commitment to their children's development in all areas of life as they were, according to Jewish law and tradition, "obligated to provide for their children's physical, educational, vocational, and emotional needs."⁷⁵ According to Jewish sources, the parents were also responsible for developing the child's character beginning this task when the child was about three or four.⁷⁶ Rokeah concludes that "the Jews of 'the Island'. . . despite all the contemporary allegations about their propensity to torture and crucify Christian boys, acted in the light of Jewish law and tradition toward their own children—unlike. . . too many of their Christian neighbors towards theirs."⁷⁷

Ephraim Kanarfogel cites Aries' description of a medieval Christian household as the antithesis of the nuclear family with many different people living in the house exposing the children to verbal, physical, and sexual abuse as well as bad behavior and immodesty. According to Kanarfogel, "intuitively, medieval Jewish historians would argue that the observance of normative Jewish law by a significant portion of the Jewish population would preclude these abuses."⁷⁸ The effective normativity of Jewish law was a result of the history of the Jews and the enduring influence of their law and religion. In twelfth-century England, on the other hand, Christianity still had not quite driven out the last vestiges of paganism. The fact that William's grandfather had a reputation as a dream interpreter indicates that some of the lower clergy were still performing functions of their pre-Christian counterparts and perhaps they, and their peasant clients, were closer to the remnants of an older popular religion than anything the church in Rome would recognize as orthodox Christianity.

Nevertheless, over generations of gradual conversion Christians had been shaken loose from the structure of their pre-Christian spirituality and morality, while at the same time being only vaguely aware of the new structure of Christian moral law. This ambiguous state may account for at least some of what appear to be immoral, or amoral, treatment of Christian children. For the Jews, on the other hand, their ancient law and religious precepts were the only constant and enduring elements in their history as well as in their lives. Such ingrained elements were powerful influences on all aspects of Jewish behavior in ways to which Christianity could as yet only aspire. We have no sources to tell us specifically how

⁷⁵ Ibid., 205.

⁷⁶ Ephraim Kanarfogel, "Attitudes Toward Childhood and Children in Medieval Jewish Society," *Approaches to Judaism in Medieval Times* (Chico: CA, Scholars Press, 1985): 1–24; here 5.

⁷⁷ Rokeah, "Unnatural Child Death," 206.

⁷⁸ Ephraim Kanarfogel, "Attitudes Toward," 6.

the Christian community felt about the strong emotional ties between Jewish parents and their children when the Christians themselves could not seem to live up to their own religious precepts regarding the treatment of their children. If the Christians were aware of these familial bonds and resented them it is possible that the ritual murder and blood libel accusations might in some small part spring from such resentments.

Karnarfogel finds that raising children was, to Jewish parents, a basically happy experience and that these parents recognized that a child's, even an older child's, nature is distinct from that of an adult. Following on this conclusion, he states that there is "the strong impression that Jewish children were on the whole simply treated in a manner far superior to their Christian counterparts."⁷⁹ If this 'strong impression' was evident to the Christians of the medieval communities where people of the two faiths lived side by side, then it is probable that Christians had some emotional response to this impression. It may have been guilt, or jealousy, or simply suspicion and anxiety over the fact that another group of people could have such a different approach to child-rearing, one of the most basic of human activities.

It must not be forgotten, however, that there were undoubtedly many Christian families with strong emotional bonds who treated their children with love and care. It is perhaps only under stress such as poverty or radical change, as in Norwich, that Christians mistreated, neglected, or even murdered their offspring. Nevertheless, the position that children hold in any society as representing both the weakness and vulnerability of that society as well as its survival, might make differences in the way children are treated a point of tension between groups.

There is one Jewish ritual concerning education that has some bearing on tensions between Jews and Christians over children and ritual murder accusations. This ritual is described by Ivan G. Marcus in his book, *Rituals of Childhood, Jewish Acculturation in Medieval Europe*.⁸⁰ Marcus presents this ritual as a phenomenon of the northern European or Ashkenazic Jewry and their attempt to maintain what he calls their "unequivocal Jewish identity" in the midst of the dominant Christian culture. The result is described as an "inward acculturation" wherein:

. . . the writings of the articulate few of the customs of the ordinary many sometimes expressed elements of their Jewish religious cultural identity by internalizing and transforming various genres, motifs, terms, institutions, or rituals of the majority culture in a polemical, parodic, or neutralized manner. . . it is not a question of Jewish

⁷⁹ Ibid., 9.

⁸⁰ Ivan G. Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood, Jewish Acculturation in Medieval Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

thinkers or groups adopting Christian patterns of behavior with the result that they somehow became less Jewish and more like the Christian majority. Only by converting did that happen. Rather, they managed to act out and reconstitute those combinations of Jewish and Christian traditions to fashion a parody and counter ritual as a social polemic against the truth claims of the majority culture.⁸¹

The ritual in question here is that of the small child being taken from his home to go to school for the first time. No such ritual existed in ancient Judaism or in Sephardic Jewry: this is an invention and adaptation of the medieval Ashkenaz; those Jews who lived in Germany, northern France, and England. The ritual itself takes place when the young boy is five or six years old.⁸² On the morning of the festival of Shavuot, or Pentecost, the boy is taken from his mother, wrapped completely in a coat or prayer shawl and carried through the streets to his teacher where he is given a tablet on which the Hebrew alphabet has been written. The letters are covered with honey and the child is told to lick the honey off. Special cakes baked by virgins with Bible verses on them and eggs with verses on them as well are given to the boy to eat after he has successfully repeated the verses as his teacher read them to him. After further instruction, the teacher takes him to the riverbank where the child is told that, like the rushing river, his Torah study will never end. Although Marcus does not refer to an English enactment of this ritual, he does cite a version from the *Mahzor Vitry* from northern France and, as the Jews in England came directly from northern France, it is plausible to speculate that this ritual was performed by the Jews in Norwich and Lincoln.

This ritual had multiple layers of meaning, several of which are pertinent to this study. The part of this rite that takes place in the public space of the Christian world is particularly significant. First, the child is taken from his mother to join the older boys and the men in the traditional pursuit of Jewish males, Torah study. The mother is a passive almost invisible figure who plays no part in her son's transition to the next phase of his life. She remains at home with the little ones. This is a completely different picture of motherhood than that presented by the ritual murder accusation myths where the participation of the mother is crucial to the import of the story. The ritual murder stories, wherein the father has no role whatsoever, highlight the strength of the influence of the Madonna and child on medieval Christian society. By contrast, the role of the father is prominent in the Jewish ritual. Another element is added to the Jewish ritual: the teacher. The child is transferred from father to teacher in a symbolic gesture marking a new stage in

⁸¹ Ibid., 11–12.

⁸² The description of the ritual is from Ephraim Kanarfogel, "Attitudes Toward and Childhood," 1.

the child's life. In the Christian world there is no such rite and children pass into apprenticeship or fosterage seemingly without any community interest or involvement.

The child is wrapped in a coat or prayer shawl and carried through the streets. The child must be completely covered because "ritual purity is required for the techniques to be effective, and achieving and maintaining purity is an integral part of the children's initiation ceremony. . . the child is wrapped in a garment so that he cannot see certain objects—a dog, an ass, a gentile, a pig—which confer impurity on sight."⁸³ It may be suggested here that the story of the man who, years after William's death, confessed to having felt a body in the 'sack' or covering the Jews were carrying through Norwich in their alleged search for a burial place, may be a Christian interpretation of this ritual. The Christian man may have been trying to make sense of the strange behavior of these new and alien folk by feeling what was under the covering while, presumably, asking them what they were doing. The Jews may have told him they were taking a boy to school or given some such logical, simple explanation that set the man's fears at rest until long after when the popular story of St. William made him doubt the explanation that he had clearly accepted at the time.

Careful ritual maintenance of the child's purity here contrasts greatly with the assumed natural purity of the Christian child discussed above. According to Marcus, the child is pure by definition "because of the association of the pure child with the law of sacrifices, or purities."⁸⁴ In fact, he says that this idea of the pure child makes its way into Christian monastic culture "by playing on the words *puer* (young boy) and *puritas* (purity)."⁸⁵ Marcus states that the ancient idea of initiation into wisdom and the fear of pollution associated with it, particularly when the child is being carried through the street of the dominant Christian community, inspired the requirement that the child be covered as a protection from polluting elements. The carrying of the child through the streets symbolized the Israelites leaving their home in Egypt and traveling through the dangerous wilderness to Sinai, but to the Christians it would have been strange, suspicious, and even frightening. By means of this journey through the streets, the child is integrated into the Jewish community and, as Marcus says, "the child embodies biblical Israel and contemporary medieval Jewry from a Jewish point of view."⁸⁶ In like fashion it can be said that images of the tortured, lifeless bodies of children, like William,

⁸³ Ibid., 69.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 70.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 70.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 80–81.

who are the victims in stories of ritual murder are meant to integrate the defining moment in Christian biblical history, the sacrifice of Christ, and the contemporary fears and anxieties of the Christian community.

The purity of the child in this Jewish ritual is associated with sacrifice through the complexities of Torah readings and Jewish history and tradition.⁸⁷ The child who studies Torah is a sacrifice that redeems the entire community and provides a vicarious atonement for the Jewish people.⁸⁸ This idea of child as sacrifice is peculiar to the medieval Ashkenaz and Marcus posits that it developed in opposition to the increasing importance of the Christian doctrine that associated the Eucharist with the Christ child.⁸⁹ The kind of intellectual sacrifice as it plays out in the Ashkenazic ritual contrasts strongly with the blood and violence that marks visions of the Eucharistic Host.

Another sacrifice with which the Jewish ritual is compared is that of monastic oblation, the practice of giving children to monasteries at an early age.⁹⁰ These Christian children were donated to the monasteries for various reasons sometimes having to do with parental atonement for sins and, once there, they were expected to participate fully, like adults, in the difficult monastic life. Beginning in the late eleventh- and early twelfth-centuries, the church began to have doubts about this practice.⁹¹ For monastic authors of the early medieval period, childhood and the monastic state had obvious similarities: the monks were meant to achieve the purity, innocence, and simplicity of a young child.⁹²

In her article "The Influence of Monastic Ideals on Carolingian Concepts of Childhood" in this volume, Valerie L. Garver points out that, prior to the twelfth century, rather than monastics being encouraged to model themselves on children, people were encouraged to raise their children in accordance with monastic ideals. The changing ideas of the twelfth century, however, led churchmen to begin to require that children be of an age to understand, and agree to take on, the rigors of the religious life. By the late twelfth- and early thirteenth-centuries boys under twelve were no longer accepted as monastic initiates and, by about the same time, the Jewish school initiation rite began to be replaced by the newly developed bar

⁸⁷ For a full discussion of these associations see Ivan G. Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood* 1996, 94–101.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 100–101.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁹¹ Mary Martin McLaughlin "Survivors and Surrogates," 129.

⁹² Mayke De Jong, *In Samuel's Image, Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West*. Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, 12 (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1996), 132.

mitzvah.⁹³ The sacrifice of the child to the Torah or the monastic life now required the awareness and willingness on the part of the child in both societies.

The idea of sacrifice both with regard to the Jewish rite and to the Eucharist has bearing on the development of the ritual murder myth. In the case of William, his construction as an innocent young child allows him to be seen as a sacrifice of atonement for the Saxon community of Norwich that overcame whatever sins may have brought the Norman oppressors and their Jewish servants down upon them. The boy's sacrifice provided the opportunity for the divided Christian communities to be at one with each other. Hugh and the other ritual murder victims can also be seen as sacrifices. In these cases the sacrifices may have been for the sake of the unity and purity of a Christendom that was seen as polluted by the presence of Jews within its precincts. Certainly the ritual murder accusation contributed to the eventual expulsion of Jews from most of northern Europe.

It is impossible to get at William as a real boy underneath all the rhetoric and symbolism. He and the other so-called ritual murder victims, are emotional pawns in a war against fear and anxiety about the tremendous changes going on in northern Europe in the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries. Much of this stress, particularly the anxieties concerning moral and spiritual values, was projected onto the Jews, people of a different faith who seemed secure and confident in their own moral and spiritual values. William, Hugh, and the others were sacrifices to the Christian cause; a cause that called particularly for Christian unity and a redefinition of Christian doctrine through the metaphor of the pure and innocent child.

In the particular cases at issue here, the acceptance of an ideology of the purity and innocence of childhood was essential even though there seemed to be ample awareness that these were not qualities real children possessed in abundance. The depiction of the Jewish father carrying the school child through the town carefully protecting his purity contrasts starkly with the image of Elviva haggling with the cook over a son she probably rarely saw anyway. In the Christian world, at least in the poorer areas, protecting children from worldly pollution was not a priority. Nevertheless, innocence and purity are necessary in the construction of William's sanctity if only because, in the case of children, purity can be equated with a *tabula rasa*: not only have the children not had any sexual experience, theoretically, but also they have not really done much of anything at all to distinguish them. Thus the hagiographer could write about them as on a blank page, almost as if he were

⁹³ Ivan G. Marcus *Rituals of Childhood* 9.

giving birth to them, creating them out of pure nothing. This was much easier in the cases of those about whom truly nothing was known.

Children were certainly treasured in the abstract in the Middle Ages. Real children were undoubtedly treasured too until poverty and stress created situations in which some of them became disposable. Changing ideas about childhood, exemplified by the new emphasis on the Christ Child in the Eucharist and in the feast of the Holy Innocents, put stress on poor parents whose traditional way of dealing with unwanted children in hard times was increasingly frowned on by both secular and ecclesiastical authorities. In Norwich in 1144, the poor were oppressed not only because of their poverty, but also because of their ethnic identity. A dead child from a poor Saxon background who could be seen as a martyr, but who was probably in reality merely the victim of mischance or foul play, brought to mind the Christ child and all the universal love that had been built into that symbol: the ideas of egalitarianism and sacrifice. The strong emotional appeal of a dead child murdered by an alien and hostile group could pull a community together even integrating those on the margins through empathy with the suffering of both the child and its mother. It is the reenactment of the Christian ideological symbol of the grieving mother and martyred child in Thomas' text that made William such a fitting and effective sacrifice. As to the children themselves, they may have been martyrs to their faith or to their community, but they were also victims of enormous changes in a society where the mechanisms for coping with such change were few and limited.

Mary Dzon

(The University of British Columbia)

Joseph and the Amazing Christ-Child of Late-Medieval Legend

In both academic and popular discourses, the phrase “Holy Family” is commonly used to refer to the threesome of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. That medieval religious writers do not seem to have had an equivalent Latin expression does not necessarily mean that they did not think of these three persons as constituting a nuclear family or were uninterested in their interactions. While late-medieval culture emphasized the sufferings of Jesus and Mary at the foot of the cross and the intimacy between them during Christ’s infancy, writers and artists also presented Christ’s boyhood as an object of meditation for their audiences.¹ Since the canonical gospels did not provide them with details about this stage of Christ’s life, they had to exercise their ingenuity in imagining what he said or did as he was growing up.² For the most part, medieval clerics’ sense of propriety and penchant for didacticism governed their depictions of the boy Jesus. Behavior considered appropriate to medieval children was hypothetically attributed to the Christ-child under the assumption that he probably acted in such a way so as to give a good example to other children. It was unthinkable—at least for most medieval Christians—that a divine child would have ever been a naughty boy.

As Caroline Walker Bynum has noted, “Not every aspect of family life is depicted in artistic renderings of the Holy Family. There are . . . all sorts of childish actions that are not attributed to the baby God.” Bynum causes us to reflect upon this point by contrasting medieval iconography of the Christ-child with a shocking painting by the twentieth-century artist Max Ernst, which depicts the Virgin Mary

¹ In this volume, Albrecht Classen, Eva Parra Membrives and Marilyn Sandidge cite examples of conventional medieval images of Mary and Jesus, in which mother and child interact with each other like ordinary humans and Mary offers up her son to his heavenly Father.

² After recounting Christ’s nativity, the gospels of Matthew and Luke pass over the early stages of Christ’s life. Luke, however, briefly narrates an incident that occurred when Jesus was twelve and attests to Jesus’s childhood development (Lk. 2: 41–52).

spanking her son.³ While Bynum's statement makes particular reference to the infant Jesus, she would presumably extend her generalization to include the boy Jesus as well. Yet an exception must be made to her observation: a relatively small number of late-medieval texts and images, ultimately based upon apocryphal infancy gospels of the early Christian era, characterize the boy Jesus as a willful child who causes his parents difficulties. Simone Martini's fourteenth-century painting "The Holy Family," a representation of the incident recounted in the second chapter of Luke, in which Mary reproves her son for not telling his parents about his whereabouts, provides another exception to Bynum's generalization (fig. 1).⁴ The boy Jesus stands besides his parents, cross-armed and apparently annoyed at their inability to understand his divine vocation. Martini's painting demonstrates that apocryphal authors were not the only people who sensed the tension latent in Luke's narration of the finding of the child Jesus in the temple.⁵ In this essay, I will focus on the conflict and misunderstanding between the boy Jesus and his father Joseph as portrayed in a number of Middle English childhood of Jesus poems that are based upon apocryphal infancy legends. To provide a sense of the cultural context of these poems, I will first consider a selection of conventional devotional texts and images that seem to have been shaped by a sense of propriety and didacticism. I will then suggest that a desire to represent the challenges of everyday family life, which the standard iconography of the Holy Family tended to ignore, seems to have motivated the retelling of the childhood of Jesus legends in the later Middle Ages.

³ "The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg," *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 79–117; here 80. As Bynum points out, the theological problem with the painting is that it suggests that "something is badly wrong between the supposedly sinless mother and her supposedly sinless son," 79–80. The boy's naughtiness is indicated by the fact that his halo has "fallen" onto the floor. For a reproduction of the painting, see *Fragmentation*, figure 3.1. When the painting was on display in Cologne in 1928, "The scandal reached such proportions that the archbishop himself proceeded to publicly excommunicate the painter before the faithful gathered in the cathedral, among whom was the artist's own father," *Ernst*, ed. Jose Maria Faerna, trans. Alberto Curotto (New York: Cameo/Abrams, 1997), 32. Ernst's picture of the Virgin spanking Jesus was possibly a response to his father's portrait of him as the Christ-child (*Max Enfant-Jesus*) to commemorate the time when he, as a boy, strayed from home and was brought back by the local police; see John Russell, *Max Ernst: Life and Works* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1960), 12–13. *Max Enfant-Jesus* is reproduced in Patrick Waldberg, *Max Ernst* (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1958), 29.

⁴ This painting is also unusual in that it portrays the Holy Family in isolation from other people, rather than among the learned teachers in the temple where the twelve-year-old Jesus was found. For a discussion of the painting, see Don Denny, "Simone Martini's *The Holy Family*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 30 (1967): 138–49.

⁵ The thirteenth-century Anglo-Latin poet Walter of Wimborne is another person who sensed conflict in this biblical scene. In one of his devotional poems, the narrator becomes Mary's lawyer and accuses the boy Jesus of impiety. See my article "Conflicting Notions of *Pietas* in Walter of Wimborne's *Marie Carmina*," *Journal of Medieval Latin* 15 (2005), forthcoming.



Figure 1: Simone Martini, "The Holy Family," reproduced with the permission of National Museums Liverpool (The Walker)

To the extent to which medieval religious iconography idealizes the interactions between Jesus, Mary and Joseph, it may be said to engage in the construction of a "Holy Family romance."⁶ The Middle English childhood of Jesus poems, in contrast, do not idealize the family life of Jesus. Their emphasis upon the tension between father and son was probably aimed at humanizing the Holy Family, and, paradoxically, at reasserting the supernatural origin of Christ, as I will explain below.⁷ As foster-father of a child who possesses miraculous powers and operates according to divine mandates, Joseph of the legends is in a unique situation. Yet insofar as he has to deal with a troublesome child, Joseph is a character whom a late-medieval audience could relate to, a parent like themselves.⁸

The pious imagination can be seen at work in a sermon by the Dominican friar Vincent Ferrer (d. 1419), who attempts to illustrate Luke's statement that Jesus "went down with them [his parents], and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them. . . . And Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men."⁹ Ferrer invites us to imagine the following scenario. One morning, when the Virgin was getting ready to fetch water, Joseph told her that he would go instead. The Christ-child then entered this dispute as a third party: "Cum autem sic pie contenderent Virgo et Joseph, veniebat Christus, et recipiebat amphoram, dicens,

⁶ Sarah Beckwith has used this expression in her discussion of Margery Kempe's fantasies of familial intimacy with Christ, "A Very Material Mysticism: The Medieval Mysticism of Margery Kempe," *Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Jane Chance (Gainesville, Tallahassee, et al.: University Press of Florida, 1996), 195–215; here 205; and *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 86. See also the study by Daniel F. Pigg in the present volume. In discussing the Madonna and child images of the later Middle Ages, Philippe Ariès used the phrase "sentimental realism" to describe how they portray Jesus and Mary interacting like ordinary human mothers and children, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 36. In my view, this phrase is somewhat of a contradiction in terms. Charming images that "stress the graceful, affectionate, naive aspects of early childhood" are not completely humanistic since they, unlike the infancy legends, exclude the depiction of any kind of friction between mother and child. Although scholars have interpreted Ariès' thesis as advocating a discovery of childhood in the post-medieval period, his discussion of late-medieval depictions of the child Jesus suggests that a greater awareness and appreciation of childhood than obtained in the earlier medieval period gradually emerged at the end of the Middle Ages.

⁷ Johan Huizinga remarks that the later Middle Ages took the humanization of Joseph too far: "[the veneration of saints] moves along with the stream of everyday thought and occasionally loses its dignity in this stream. The medieval veneration of Joseph is a case in point," *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 193.

⁸ Steven M. Taylor similarly argues for the didactic function of the apocryphal infancy legends appearing in French literature, but he downplays the naughtiness attributed to the child Jesus in his sources. See "Heavenly Humility: The Holy Family as Role Model for Parents and Children in Medieval French Literature," *Cahiers de Joséphologie* 28 (1980): 45–59.

⁹ I cite here the Douay-Rheims translation of the Bible. The passage which follows is taken from *Sancti Vincentii Ferrari. . . Opera omnia*, Vol. 1 (Valencia, 1693), 293. I am very grateful to Professor Pedro M. Cátedra of the University of Salamanca for providing me with this text.

'Ego ibo'" ["in the midst of their kindly contention, Jesus came in, took up the pitcher and said, 'I will go'"]. Joseph commanded him deferentially not to go, "O Domine, vos non ibitis" ["Lord, you shall not go"]. But Christ replied, "ibo, vt dem exemplum aliis filiis" ["I will go in order to set a good example for other children"]. Ferrer proceeds to imagine what Jesus would have said if someone, upon his return, had asked him why he did this. He has the boy reply, "vt quando filii Christianorum audient hoc servitium quod ego facio parentibus meis, huiusmodi exemplo ipsi seruiant, et ministrent parentibus suis" ["so that when Christian children hear about the service I perform for my parents, they themselves will serve and minister to their parents after my example"]. Ferrer's use of the adverb "pie" to describe how Mary and Joseph disagree with one another is probably intended to forestall his audience's objection to the idea of conflict existing within the Holy Family. To commend the family members' mutual desire to serve one another, he quotes the adult Christ's saying that he "came not to be served, but to serve" (Mt. 20:28).

The legend about the Christ-child drawing water from a well also appears in other medieval religious texts. Throughout his *Historia scholastica* (ca. 1170) Peter Comestor includes various legends pertaining to the biblical narrative, yet on the topic of Christ's childhood he mentions only the temple incident recounted by Luke.¹⁰ An additional remark found in some manuscripts, however, calls attention to a historical landmark associated with the boy Jesus: "Dicitur ibi fons esse parvus, de quo puer Jesus hauriebat, et ministrabat matri, dum subditus erat" ["There is said to be a small fountain there from which the boy Jesus drew water in the service of his mother, when he was subject to her"].¹¹ In his *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, the fourteenth-century Franciscan Johannes de Caulibus similarly notes that "Dicitur. . . et uerisimile est quod adhuc est ibi fons de quo puer Iesus deferebat aquam matri" ["it is said and is probably true, that to this day you can see the well from which the boy Jesus fetched water for his mother"].¹² Despite his

¹⁰ "Porro de infantia Salvatoris, et operibus eius usque ad baptismum, non legitur in Evangelio nisi quod Lucas dicit duodennem remansisse in Jerusalem, et post triduum inventum a parentibus in medio doctorum audientem, et interrogantem eos" ["but concerning his infancy and his deeds up until his baptism, nothing is mentioned in the gospel except that Luke says that he remained in Jerusalem when he was twelve, and after three days was found by his parents amidst the teachers, listening to them and questioning them"], *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne, Vol. 198, cols. 1549c-d. This statement may possibly suggest a refusal on Comestor's part to acknowledge the validity of certain legends he has read in a book called *the Infantia Salvatoris*.

¹¹ PL 198, col. 1550a, additio. Vincent Ferrer notes that Comestor "expresse dicit, quod Christus cum aliis pueris ibat ad portandum aquam de fonte" [expressly says that Christ went with other children to draw water from a well"], *Opera omnia*, 293.

¹² *Meditaciones vite Christi*, ed. M. Stallings-Taney. Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis, 153 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 59. I cite the English translation by Francis X. Taney, Anne Miller and C. Mary Stallings-Taney (Asheville, North Carolina: Pegasus Press, 2000), 52. As Taney, Miller and Stallings-Taney point out, scholars are not completely certain that Johannes de

uncertainty about this detail, Johannes presumably includes it because it demonstrates the exemplary piety of the boy Jesus and the poverty of the Holy Family. He remarks that "Faciebat enim huiusmodi seruicia matri humilis Dominus: non enim habebat alium seruientem" ["Our humble Lord was accustomed to perform services of this type for his mother. She had no one else to help her"].¹³ Johannes then describes what Jesus did between the ages of twelve and thirty: he went to the synagogue to pray, stayed at home with his mother, and sometimes helped his foster-father.¹⁴

St. Bridget of Sweden (d. 1373) similarly notes that the boy Jesus performed manual labor: in her *Revelations*, the Virgin Mary tells her that when the Holy Family returned from the temple in Jerusalem, Jesus "trauailed with his handes onest werkes. . . and he talde vs mani comfortabill wordes. . . he gafe vs no gold bot ai stird vs to paciens" ["did honest work with his hands. . . and he told us many comforting words. . . he gave us no gold but always inspired us to be patient"].¹⁵ The Anglo-Norman *Holkham Bible Picture Book* likewise depicts Jesus doing chores for his parents: besides drawing water from a well, he blows a fire and serves his parents at table.¹⁶ Similarly, in the rule he wrote for a female recluse, the Cistercian abbot Aelred of Rievaulx (d. 1166) tells his reader that "hit schal be non harm to þe alþou₃ þu be-þenke þe how þy 3unge husbonde Crist, while he was child, childly and myryli pleyde hym among oþer children at Nazareth, and oþer-whyle hou seruisable he was to his moder, and anoþer tyme how swete and gracious he was to his nursche" ["it shall not be harmful to you to think how your young husband Christ, when he was a child, merrily played like a child with other children at Nazareth, and how he was sometimes helpful to his mother, and sometimes sweet and gracious to his foster-father"].¹⁷

Caulibus is the name of the author of the *Meditaciones*, xiii-xiv. On the date of the text, see Sarah McNamer, "Further Evidence for the Date of the Pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditaciones Vitae Christi*," *Franciscan Studies*, new series, 50 (1990): 235-61.

¹³ *Meditaciones*, 59. *Meditations*, 52.

¹⁴ *Meditaciones*, 65. *Meditations*, 56. One of the illustrations in an Italian manuscript of the *Meditaciones* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS Ital. 115) portrays Jesus serving his parents at table. See the translation by Isa Ragusa and Rosalie B. Green, *Meditations on the Life of Christ: An Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 84, illustration 74. For a study of the iconography of this manuscript, see Stephen M. Wagner, *Embracing Convent Life through Illustrations of the Holy Family in a Fourteenth Century Italian Translation of the Meditations on the Life of Christ* (M.A. thesis, Florida State University, 1995).

¹⁵ *The Liber Celestis of St. Bridget of Sweden*, ed. Roger Ellis, Early English Text Society, original series 291 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 447. For the original Latin text, see *Sancta Birgitta Revelaciones: Book VI*, ed. Birger Bergh (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1991), 201.

¹⁶ For the illustration, see the facsimile *The Holkham Bible Picture Book*, ed. W. O. Hassall (London: The Dropmore Press, 1954), fol. 18r. For the text, see *The Anglo-Norman Text of the Holkham Bible Picture Book*, ed. F. P. Pickering, Anglo-Norman Text Society, 23 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 29.

¹⁷ *Aelred of Rievaulx's De Institutione Inclusarum; Two English Versions*, ed. John Ayto and Alexandra

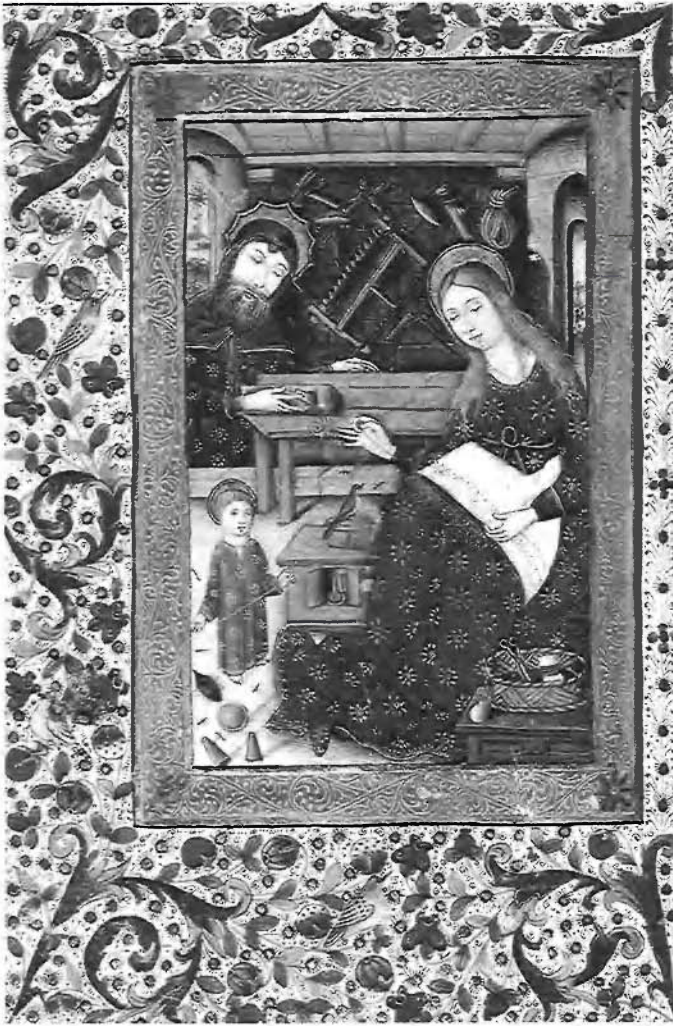


Figure 2: London, British Library, Additional 18193, fol. 48v, reproduced with the permission of the British Library

Barratt. EETS, o.s. 287 (London: Oxford University Press, 1984), 41, ll. 637–61. For the Latin text, see *De institutione inclusarum*, ed. A. Hoste and C. H. Talbot, in *Opera omnia, Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Mediaevalis* 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971), 664. “Nurse” here means “foster-father” rather than “nanny” or “wet-nurse”; it is not intended as a disparaging reference to St. Joseph. See the entry on “nurse” in the *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. Robert E. Lewis, Sherman M. Kuhn and Hans Kurath (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952). In the Latin text, the word “nutricius,” meaning “foster-father,” is used for Joseph.

A miniature found in a fifteenth-century Spanish Book of Hours (London, BL, Additional 18193, fol. 48v) comes close to representing what Aelred has in mind (fig. 2). The child Jesus occupies himself with small objects while his parents are engaged in manual labor, Mary with her sewing, Joseph with his carpentry. We can also see the Holy Family at work in a contemporary miniature from the Hours of Catherine of Cleves, which depicts Jesus moving about in his walker while Mary and Joseph are busy with their gender-specific tasks.¹⁹ In another domestic scene of the Holy Family, Mary nurses the infant, while Joseph sits by himself in a corner.²¹

In other late-medieval artistic representations and in plays, Joseph cooks baby food, cuts up his stockings to make swaddling clothes for the infant, dries the baby's diapers, and bathes him. Although Joseph may seem somewhat undignified in these maternal postures, they can be interpreted positively as a demonstration of his genuine love for his helpless charge.²² While medieval artists did not present the image of Joseph holding the infant Jesus in isolation (as the two are portrayed by later artists and can be seen on modern Catholic prayer cards),²³ some medieval writers reflected on the intimacy between Joseph and the Christ-child.²⁴ In a

¹⁹ *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves* ed. John Plummer (New York: George Braziller, 1966), no. 92.

²¹ *Hours of Catherine*, no. 93. It is not clear whether he is eating a bowl of porridge sulkily to compensate for the attention his wife is lavishing on Jesus, or carefully testing the mush before feeding it to the baby. I am inclined to accept the first possibility as being the artist's intention, considering that he emphasizes the physical separation between Joseph and the Madonna and child. Note, too, that only Mary and Jesus have halos in the scenes of the Holy Family in the *Hours of Catherine of Cleves*. In the rest on the flight into Egypt in Master Bertram's Petri-Altar, Joseph is similarly depicted feeding himself while Mary nurses the baby Jesus. For a negative interpretation of Joseph's portrayal in this scene, see Ruth Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), Vol. 1, 226; Vol. 2, fig. xi.35; for a positive interpretation of this image, based on its supposed Petrine symbolism, see Sheila Schwartz, "St. Joseph in Meister Bertram's Petri-Altar," *Gesta* 24 (1985): 147–56.

²² Daniele Alexandre-Bidon and Didier Lett, *Children in the Middle Ages: Fifth-Fifteenth Centuries*, trans. Jody Gladding (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 62–63. On the relics of Joseph's stockings, with which he kept the baby Jesus warm, see Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Later Middle Ages* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 58–59. On the application of the hagiographical trope *imitatio mariae* to medieval images of Joseph, see Rosemary Drage Hale, "Joseph as Mother: Adaptation and Appropriation in the Construction of Male Virtue," *Medieval Mothering*, ed. John Carmi Parson and Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Garland, 1996), 101–16; and Stephen K. Wright, "Two Medieval German Christmas Plays from the Erlau Playbook," *Allegorica: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Literature* 20 (1999): 45–91.

²³ Louis Réau notes that "tandis que l'art médiéval ne le représente presque jamais isolément sans doute par crainte de justifier par des images cultuelles l'hérésie de la conception naturelle du Christ, après la Contre-Réforme, on fait l'honneur de le représenter pour lui-même. . . en père nourricier de Jésus," *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, Vol. 2.2 (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1957), 756–57.

²⁴ On post-medieval images of Joseph, see the recent monograph by Carolyn J. Wilson, *St. Joseph in*

homily in praise of the Virgin Mary, Bernard of Clairvaux exalts Joseph over all those who had awaited the Messiah: "cui denique datum est quod multi reges et prophetae, cum vellent videre, non viderunt, et audire, non audierunt, non solum videre et audire, sed etiam portare, deducere, amplecti, deosculari, nutrire et custodire" ["To him it was given not only to see and to hear what many kings and prophets had longed to see and did not see, to hear and did not hear, but even to carry him, to take him by the hand, to hug and kiss him, to feed him and to keep him safe"].²⁵

Images of tenderness such as this one pertain to Joseph and his infant charge. How, we might ask, did medieval people conceive of father and son relating to each other when Jesus was a boy and later an adolescent? Whereas the devotional texts and images we have considered thus far give us snap-shots of Christ's infancy and childhood, the apocryphal legends take matters further by churning out story after story about the Holy Family. Rather than limit their attention to the domestic life of the Holy Family depicted in relatively static scenes, the apocryphal narrators imagined the interaction that took place between the boy Jesus, his parents, and their Jewish neighbors. In the later Middle Ages, legends about the boyhood of Jesus were recounted in a Latin work known as the *Liber de Infantia Salvatoris*, an apocryphal text that combined stories about Christ's miraculous conception, birth and flight into Egypt recounted in the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew with childhood of Jesus stories from the Infancy Gospel of Thomas.²⁶

Italian Renaissance Society and Art: New Directions and Interpretations (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2001); and the collection of essays edited Joseph F. Chorprenning, *The Holy Family in Art and Devotion* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 1998).

²⁵ For the Latin, see *A la louange de la Vierge Mère*, ed. and trans. Marie-Imelda Huille and Joel Regnard, Sources Chrétiennes, 390 (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1993), 166. For the translation I cite *Magnificat: Homilies in Praise of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, trans. Marie-Bernard Said and Grace Perigo, Cistercian Fathers Series, 18 (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1979), 29. This prayer was formerly recited by Roman Catholic priests before celebrating mass since they, like Joseph, were believed to hold the incarnate Christ in their hands. See *The Raccolta, or Collection of Indulgences Prayers and Good Works*, ed. Ambrose St. John (London: Burns & Oates, 1910), 401, no. 468. For depictions of Joseph holding the Christ-child in his arms found in an Italian translation of the *Meditaciones vitae Christi*, see Wagner, *Embracing Convent Life*, figures 18 and 20. As Sheila Schwartz has pointed out, a medieval exegetical tradition saw Joseph as a priestly figure in his care for the Christ-child, "St. Joseph in Meister Bertram's Petri-Altar," 152. Jean Gerson also imagined the tender care Joseph expended on the infant Jesus. Joseph, he said, "feust gouverneur dudit enfant Jhesus, le porta souuent, le baisa souuent, laraisonna souuent plus familièrement quaultre homme quelconques" ["was the guardian of the infant Jesus, he carried him often, kissed him often, and spoke to him more familiarly than any other man"], *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Palemon Glorieux, Vol. 2 (Paris: Desclée, 1960), 156. Bernardino of Siena also reflected on the intimacy between Joseph and Jesus; see "In vigilia nativitatit dominini," in *Opera omnia*, Vol. 7 (Quaracchi, 1959), 25–26.

²⁶ Whereas the Infancy Gospel of Thomas was composed in the early Christian era, the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew dates to the early medieval period. For introductions to these texts, see J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English*

Circulation of such a Latin text in the later Middle Ages is attested to by a version of it printed as a quarto by William Caxton in 1477.²⁷ There are also a number of extant Middle English poems based upon these legends, which I have already alluded to. These were either translations of some unknown Latin version of the *Infantia Salvatoris* or a French version of this text which is no longer extant.²⁸ The Middle English texts appear to have appealed to an audience of pious laity: in the middle of the fifteenth century, Robert Thornton, a member of the Yorkshire gentry, copied a Middle English childhood of Jesus into one of his miscellanies. At the end of the fifteenth century the widowed duchess of York Cecily Neville had a text called the *Infantia Salvatoris* read to her over dinner.²⁹ I will concentrate below on the portrayal of Joseph in the section of the *Infantia Salvatoris* based upon the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, but will first summarize the events narrated in the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew portion, calling attention to details that reveal the character of Joseph.

When Mary, who has grown up in the temple, comes of marriageable age, she declares her intention to remain a virgin. The Jewish priests decide to give her to one of the unmarried men of the tribe of Judah to serve as her guardian. They know that Joseph is the man destined for this office when a white dove miraculously flies from the top of his rod.³⁰ Embarrassed by being singled out for this role, Joseph protests that he is an old man with children from a previous marriage, and that Mary is like a granddaughter to him on account of her youth.³¹ Joseph, however, agrees to carry out his duty when the priests warn him against despising the will of God.³²

Upon his return home after an extensive absence, Joseph is aghast to find Mary pregnant, disbelieving the virgins when they testify to her innocence. Greatly

Translation (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 68–99.

²⁷ For an edition, see *W. Caxtons Infantia Salvatoris*, ed. Ferdinand Holthausen (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1891).

²⁸ For a description of the extant Middle English texts, see chapter 3, section 3, of my Ph.D. thesis, *The Image of the Wanton Christ-Child in the Apocryphal Infancy Legends of Late Medieval England* (University of Toronto, 2004). For editions of the extant Old French and Anglo-Norman childhood of Jesus poems, consult those by Maureen Boulton, *The Old French Évangile de l'Enfance* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984); *Les enfances de Jesu Crist*. Anglo-Norman Text Society, 43 (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1985).

²⁹ A household ordinance dating sometime before Cecily's death (1495) describes her devotional reading habits. See "Orders and Rules of the Princess Cecill," *A Collection of Ordinances and Regulations for the Government of the Royal Household* (London, 1790), 37*. For a discussion of Cecily's religiosity, see C. A. J. Armstrong, "The Piety of Cicely, Duchess of York: A Study in Late Mediaeval Culture," *England, France and Burgundy in the Fifteenth Century* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1983).

³⁰ *Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium Textus et Commentarius*, in *Libri de Nativitate Mariae*, ed. Jan Gijzel, *Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum*, 9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 363.

³¹ *Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium* 365 and 367.

³² *Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium* 367 and 69.

fearing the wrath of the Jewish priests, Joseph contemplates dismissing Mary, but is told by an angel in a dream not to fear because Mary's offspring is conceived of the Holy Ghost (cf. Mt. 1:19). Joseph confesses his sin of wrongfully suspecting Mary of infidelity, and both he and Mary are able to endure the test of infidelity to which they are subjected. After the miraculous birth of Jesus and the adoration of the magi, an angel appears to Joseph in a dream, telling him to flee with Mary and the child into Egypt (cf. Mt. 2:13).

When, on this journey, dragons come out of a cave, the one-year-old Jesus walks among them to prevent them from harming anyone. He assures his frightened parents that they need not fear for his life: "Nolite me considerare quia infantulus sum; ego enim semper uir perfectus fui et sum, et necesse est ut omnia genera ferarum mansuescere faciam" ["Do not think that I am an infant; for I always was and am a grown man, and it is necessary that I tame all kinds of wild animals"].³³ When Mary expresses her wish to eat of the fruit from a tree, Joseph chides her request as being childish: "Miror te hoc dicere, cum uideas quanta altitudo palmae huius sit" ["I wonder that you say such things, Mary, when you see that this palm tree is so tall"].³⁴ Jesus takes control of the situation, causing the tree to bend down and spring forth water so that the travelers can refresh themselves.³⁵

In the incidents portraying Joseph's reluctance to take Mary as his wife and his dismay at her miraculous conception, he seems to lack the courage and wisdom necessary to fulfill his destined role as husband of the Virgin. He prefers to live a life of celibate obscurity, and cowers before the Jewish elders, fearful of offending the law to which they adhere. On account of this behavior Joseph can be said to lack the self-confidence expected of men in medieval culture, displaying instead the emotionality typically associated with women and children.³⁶ In the dragon and palm tree incidents, Jesus seems to take over Joseph's role of protector and

³³ *Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium* 451.

³⁴ *Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*, 461. The incident forms the basis of "The Cherry-Tree Ballad." See Sherwyn T. Carr, "The Middle English Nativity Cherry Tree: The Dissemination of a Popular Motif," *Modern Language Quarterly* 36 (1975): 133–47.

³⁵ In her contribution to this volume, Eva Parra Membrives notes that Hrotsvit of Gandersheim recounts this incident in her poem *Maria*, but that she does not explore the emotive relationship between mother and child, probably on account of her lack of maternal experience.

³⁶ Aelred of Rievaulx, for example, forbids female recluses to teach children at their window because he assumes that they would become emotionally unstable like the children around them. See *De institutione inclusarum*, 640–41. On medieval views of men's rationality and women's corporeality, see, for example, Vern L. Bullough, "On Being a Male in the Middle Ages," *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, ed. Clare A. Lees (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1994), 32. Pamela Sheingorn similarly analyzes the figure Joseph in the apocryphal infancy legends, focusing on Joseph's lack of masculinity as revealed in the incidents occurring on the flight into Egypt. She bases her analysis on a medieval German apocryphal text in prose. See "Joseph the Carpenter's Failure at Familial Discipline," *Insights and Interpretations: Studies in Celebration of the Eighty-Fifth Anniversary of the Index of Christian Art*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 156–67.

provider. He is a *puer-senex* who wields authority over nature and over his parents, while Joseph is cast as a fearful old man, unequal to the challenges of the flight into Egypt.³⁷ It was probably with these stories in mind that the French theologian and university chancellor Jean Gerson (d. 1429), a zealous advocate of Joseph's cult, argued that Joseph must not have been an old man, because if he were, he would have lacked the strength necessary for the hardships involved in that arduous journey.³⁸

I would now like to consider more closely the medieval legends that describe what the boy Jesus did as he was growing up after the Holy Family returned from Egypt, focusing in particular on the relationship between Joseph and Jesus. As sources I will use the Middle English poems that are based upon the *Infantia Salvatoris*.³⁹ Unlike Vincent Ferrer's Jesus who volunteers to do chores for the sake of setting a good example (see above), the apocryphal Christ-child is a boy who, for the most part, cannot and, indeed, should not be emulated by other children.⁴⁰ The boy's playmates and schoolmasters suffer on account of the wonderful powers he possesses. On numerous occasions, Joseph tries, but is unable, to restrain Jesus.

³⁷ On the hagiographical trope of the *puer-senex*, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990; originally published in German in 1948), 98–101; Teresa C. Carp, "Puer senex in Roman and Medieval Thought," *Latomus* 39 (1980): 736–39; Michael Goodich, "Childhood and Adolescence among the Thirteenth Century Saints," *History of Childhood Quarterly* 1 (1973): 285–309; here 287–88; Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell, *Saints and Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000–1700* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982), ch. 1; Christian Gnllka, *Aetas Spiritalis: Die Überwindung der natürlichen Altersstufen als Ideal frühchristlichen Lebens* (Bonn: Peter Hanstein Verlag, 1972), passim; J. A. Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), chs. 3 and 4; Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1990), 15–16, 196–99; and Elena Giannarelli, "Infanzia e santità: un problema della biografia cristiana antica," *Bambini Santi: Rappresentazioni dell' Infanzia e Modelli Agiografici*, ed. Elena Giannarelli and Anna Benvenuti Papi (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1991), 33–39.

³⁸ As noted by David Herlihy, *Medieval Households* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985), 128. Sheingorn argues that Gerson promoted the image of Joseph as an admirable head of his family in order to restore order within the church. See "'Illustis patriarcha Joseph': Jean Gerson, Representations of Saint Joseph, and Imagining Community among Churchmen in the Fifteenth Century," *Visions of Community in the Pre-modern World*, ed. Nicholas Howe (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 75–108. For a study of Gerson's efforts to increase his contemporaries' devotion to Joseph, see Paul Payan, "Pour retrouver un père. . . La promotion du culte de saint Joseph au temps de Gerson," *Cahiers de Recherches Medievales* 4 (1997): 15–29.

³⁹ Most of these episodes are derived from the early-Christian Infancy Gospel of Thomas, although some seem to come from later sources, both oral and written.

⁴⁰ Gillian Clark likewise remarks that "the stories of Jesus' own childhood which circulated in the apocryphal 'infancy gospels' were concerned with the power of this exceptional child and certainly not intended as models for other children," "The Fathers and the Children," *Church and Childhood: Papers Read at the 1993 Summer Meeting and the 1994 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. Diana Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 1–27; here 20.

As he confesses to Mary: "Me of pinchez þoruȝ alle þingue / Of Jesues conteyngninge; / Bot i ne may in none wise / Of is dedes hine Justise" ["I am in all respects grieved by Jesus's behavior, but I may in no way discipline him for his deeds"].⁴¹ Jesus never limits himself to mere child's play. When the boy Judas ruins the little pools that he has made, Jesus angrily curses him so that he dies. Jesus then makes birds from the mud of his pools. When a Jew complains to Joseph that his son is working on the Sabbath, "Ioseph on hys heued þan ihesus smate; / He sayde, 'þu sulde be with us algate, / Ffra wanton childer draw'" ["Joseph then hit Jesus on the head and said, 'You should always be with us, away from those unruly children'"].⁴² Angry and frustrated that his foster-son is causing problems, Joseph uses corporal punishment on Jesus.⁴³ The boy responds impishly to his foster-father's admonition by making the birds come to life and commanding them to fly forth. Rather than fear further punishment, Jesus "louȝh so þat it dude him guod" ["laughed so that it did him good"].⁴⁴ Later, when Jesus causes the death of a boy who runs into him, "Ioseph toke þan ihesus by þe eres, / Sayd, 'þu kan haf no ryste'" ["Joseph took Jesus by the ears and said, 'Won't you ever settle down?'"].⁴⁵ When the father of the dead child learns what happened from the other children, he and his friends complain to Joseph: "gude man, all hayle / ȝour childe þat standes before us here / On better maner bus ȝow hym lere / Elles all ȝour frendshyp wil fayle" [greetings, good man, you ought to teach better manners to your child who stands before us here or else you will lose all your friends].⁴⁶ Joseph is frightened by their threats. Rather than deal with this situation, he passes responsibility onto Mary, since, as far as he is concerned, Jesus is really *her* child, not his: Joseph "Bad hir scho suld take hede / Ihesus hyr ȝong son, better to tent, / Elles wyll he gar us all be shent" ["told her she should take heed to discipline her son Jesus better, 'otherwise he will bring about our ruin'"].⁴⁷ Joseph and Mary send Jesus to school on several occasions at the Jews' suggestion,

⁴¹ *Altenglische Legenden: Kindheit Jesu, Geburt Jesu, Barlaam und Josaphat, St. Patrik's Fegefeuer*, ed. Carl Horstmann (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1875), 37, ll. 1089–92.

⁴² *The Middle English Stanzaic Versions of the Life of Saint Anne*, ed. Roscoe E. Parker. EETS, o.s. 174 (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), 46, ll. 1765–67. For the tendency of medieval writers to speak of children as "wanton" (in Middle English) or "lascivi" (in Latin), and the speculation they offered as to the causes of children's wantonness, see chapter one of *The Image of the Wanton Christ-Child*.

⁴³ This detail is striking considering that the ultimate Greek source-text, the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, says Joseph pulled Jesus's ear, but does not describe Joseph as hitting him. See *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas*, trans. Ronald F. Hock (Santa Rosa, California: Polebridge Press, 1995), 111.

⁴⁴ *Altenglische Legenden*, 15, l. 384.

⁴⁵ *Life of Saint Anne*, 48, ll. 1856–57. Albrecht Classen mentions Konrad von Fussesbrunnen's *Leben Jesu* in the introduction to this volume.

⁴⁶ *Life of Saint Anne*, 47, ll. 1785–88.

⁴⁷ *Life of Saint Anne*, 47, ll. 1800–02.

hoping that their son will mend his ways, but the boy's pride and lethal behavior persist. Several of his schoolmasters die as a result of their encounters with their precocious and powerful pupil.

While the Jewish adults blame both Joseph and Mary for their son's unruliness, and threaten to inflict various forms of punishment on all of them,⁴⁸ they tend to menace Joseph more fiercely than they do Mary, presumably because they consider it primarily his paternal duty to discipline Jesus.⁴⁹ Just as Joseph in the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew fears the Jewish elders when Mary is found pregnant, so in the legends relating Christ's childhood antics, Joseph lives in constant fear that the Jews will harm him, his wife and his foster-child.⁵⁰ Sometimes Joseph's desire for self-preservation seems to trump his concern for Jesus's welfare, as when he "drof. . . a wei Jhesum and seide þat he ne scholde none languore duelle with him, for he was so much i blamed for is dedes" ["drove. . . away Jesus and said that he should no longer dwell with him, since he was the cause of much reproach on account of his deeds"].⁵¹ At one point, rather than deal with the latest crisis, Joseph decides to run away from the Holy Family, informing Mary: "Þi child I will ga fra hym / He dos so many a wykkid dede / Some hasty man forþi I drede / Þerfore sum tym sal sla hym" ["I will go away from your child who does so many wicked deeds that some time some angry man, I fear, will kill him"].⁵²

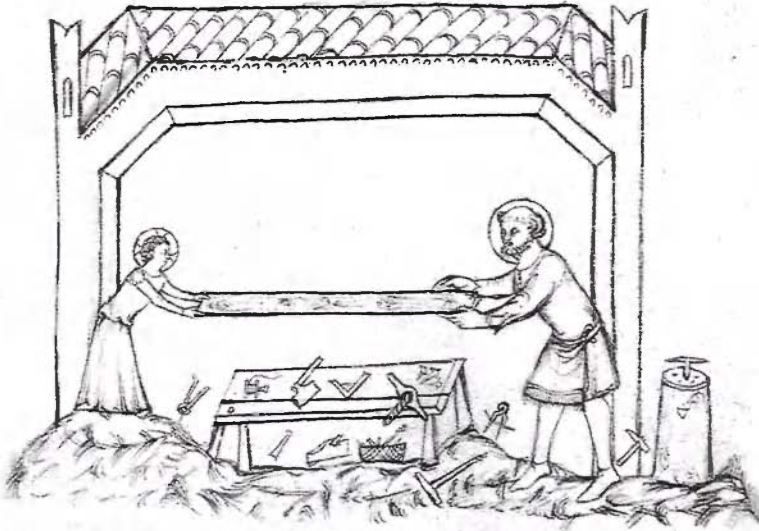
⁴⁸ The Middle English poets exaggerate the Jews' malice by having these characters threaten to make mincemeat out of Joseph and Mary, and to crucify Jesus, "Nachträge zu den Legenden," ed. Carl Horstmann, *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 74 (1885): 327–39; here 330, ll. 197–98; *Altenglische Legenden*, 29, ll. 845–47.

⁴⁹ In his English translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus's encyclopedia, John Trevisa sets forth the medieval English understanding of a father's duty: A man who loves his child "techiþ him in his 3outh wiþ speche and wiþ wordis, and chastip him wiþ beting, and settip and puttip him to lore vndir warde and kepinge of wardeynes and tutours" ["teaches him in his youth with speech and words, and chastises him with beatings, and sets and puts him under tutelage for the sake of instruction and entrusts him to the governance of guardians and tutors"], *On the Properties of Things. John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum*, ed. M. C. Seymour, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 310. Mothers were also expected to play a disciplinarian role. The author of *Dives and Pauper* warns that "þe fadir & moodir schul answern. . . for her childyrs wyckydnesse, but þei don her deuer to chastysen hem in her 3ougþe" ["the father and the mother shall answer. . . for their children's wickedness, unless they do their duty to chastise them in their youth"], ed. Priscilla Heath Barnum. EETS, o.s. 275 (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), 325.

⁵⁰ Surprisingly, the legends' portrayal of the Jews' wanting to kill the Christ-child is similar to a hypothesis put forth by Thomas Aquinas in his argument against the truthfulness of the *Liber de Infantia Salvatoris*: it was fitting, he says, that Christ did not begin to work miracles in his first age because if he had done so, "Aestimassent [Israelitae] enim phantasiam esse incarnationem: et ante opportunum tempus eum cruci tradidissent livore liquefacti" [the Jews would indeed have thought that the incarnation was a phantasm, and, overcome with malice, they would have handed him over for crucifixion before the opportune time], *Summa Theologiae: Prima Pars* (Madrid: Biblioteca de autores cristianos, 1951), 3, q. 36, a. 4, ad 3.

⁵¹ *Altenglische Legenden*, 39.

⁵² *Life of Saint Anne*, 55, ll. 2103–06.



¶ Tunc autem erat ihs annorum octo.
 erat ioseph architectus et opabatur
 in ligno. Una autem die quidam
 dices homo rogauit eum dicens.
 Domine ioseph rogo uos. ut michi
 faciatis optimū gratiā et mul-
 tiū. et obtulit ei lignū ad faciē-
 dū opus. ioseph autem accipiens
 lignū cepit eū mēsurare. et nō
 puenēbat lignū ad faciēdū opū.
 illud. q̄ sinderat eum. et cepit o-
 tristan ioseph. quia non poterat

secundum uoluntate suam facere.
 ¶ Tūc autem puer ihs cōtristat
 ioseph dixit ei. Noli contristan. s̄
 apphēde unū caput ligni. et ego
 apphēdā aliud. et rectā dū bñ q̄
 tum possūm. Sic factū. ioseph
 adhuc cepit mēsurare lignū. et ui-
 uenit optimū pro eo negocio. iō-
 seph autem cū mōstret quā fecerat
 puenit amplexatus est eū dicens.
 Beatus sum ego quia talem pu-
 erū donauit michi deus.

Figure 3: Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, L. 58. sup., fol. 15v
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By emphasizing Joseph's timidity, the apocryphal legends suggest that he lacks the level-headedness necessary to govern his family. Mary also fears for the Holy Family's survival, but generally maintains peace of mind in the midst of turmoil, on account of her conviction that God will take care of everything. This can be seen in the way that Mary reassures Joseph, after he informs her of the latest conflict between the child Jesus and the Jews: "Ioseph dred 3ow no3t; / He þat hym heder sent and broght / On na wyse wyl forga hym, / & he wyll kepe hym boyth day & nyght / þat na man gettes of hym swylke myght. / To hys kepyng I be take hym" ["fear not, Joseph, he that sent and brought him hither will in no way abandon him. He will protect him both night and day so that no man will be able to kill him. To his keeping I entrust him"].⁵³ Admittedly, on one occasion, Mary expresses exasperation with her son's naughty behavior: "dere sone, this foly þou cesse! / I pray the, if it be thi wille, / Thou late vs somewhere lyfe in peese" [dear son, cease your folly! I beseech you, if it be your will, let us live somewhere in peace"].⁵⁴

As indicated by her speech, Mary has in mind the Holy Family's frequent relocations, which had been Joseph's main tactic for avoiding conflict with their Jewish neighbors. Most of the time, Mary remains calm, gently persuading her son to restore to life those whose death he is supposed to have caused. To take an example: Mary begs Jesus that he bring back to life a boy who fell from a flight of stairs by saying, "Lefe sone, lyfe late thou hym haue, / I praye the, if thi wille it bee" [dear son, let him have life, I beseech you, if it be your will"].⁵⁵ Although Mary strikes Jesus in the "Ballad of the Bitter Witty" for causing the death of his playmates, in the apocryphal legends she, unlike Joseph, never uses corporal punishment on him.⁵⁶ After a while, the Jews go straight to Mary when the latest disaster has struck, for they come to realize the power of her maternal intercession. Like a dutiful son, Jesus always concedes to her wishes.

In these poems the relationship between Jesus and Mary may be compared to that between a prince and his queen mother. Jesus tends to regard Joseph as his mother's groom, rather than as his foster-father who exercises legitimate authority over him.⁵⁷ Joseph himself creates a matriarchical arrangement by repeatedly running to Mary when troubles arise. For instance, when the Jews tell Joseph to

⁵³ *Life of Saint Anne*, 55, ll. 2107–12. Mary also assumes, naively, that Jesus can simply cause his enemies to die before they kill him. See, for example, "Nachträge," 335, ll. 571–72.

⁵⁴ "Nachträge," 334, ll. 506–08. For an explicit reference to Joseph's practice of relocating the Holy Family, see *Life of Saint Anne*, 62, ll. 2368–70.

⁵⁵ "Nachträge," 334, ll. 553–54.

⁵⁶ On the ballad, see Gordon Hall Gerould, "The Ballad of the Bitter Witty," *PMLA* 23 (1908): 141–67. The boy Jesus causes his playmates to drown and his mother strikes him with a "handful of bitter witty" to punish his naughty behavior.

⁵⁷ Note, for example, the way Jesus mentions Joseph as an afterthought in his statement that he commands the tree to bend down "For mi Moder and for hire fere, / For iche ire louie" [for my mother and her companion, for I love her]. *Altenglische Legenden*, 8, ll. 160–61.

chastise his son for causing the death of his playmates, "Ioseph lay þer all at male esse, / Sayd mary suld þat mys amese" ["Joseph was in distress and said that Mary should ameliorate the situation"].⁵⁸ Joseph is despondent about his power to control Jesus, and is even scared of upsetting him. He justifies abdicating his authority to Mary by the following reasoning: "3if ich were in þat wille / þat iche seide ou3t him for to grulle, / He wolde cuyþe on me is mi3ht" ["if I were of a mind to say anything that would annoy him, he would exhibit his power against me"].⁵⁹

While the relationship between father and son in these legends is hardly exemplary, the legends do not fail to mention the affection that exists between Joseph and Jesus. Some of the recipients of the Christ-child's beneficence are connected with Joseph in some way. For example, when Mary explains to Jesus that Joseph's "best friends" are suffering from a famine, Jesus causes a miraculous harvest of wheat.⁶⁰ On another occasion, when a rich man who bears the name of Joseph dies, Jesus orders Joseph to take the kerchief that he is wearing, place it upon the dead man, and bid him rise in Jesus's name.⁶¹

Another story relates how Jesus comes to the aid of Joseph himself when the old man discovers that his servant has cut a piece of wood too short. Jesus tells Joseph not to worry and then lengthens the beam for him.⁶² In this episode, the narrator explicitly comments on the bond between father and son: "Jesus louede Josepe a ri3ht, / And Josep Jhesum bi daye and ni3ht" ["Jesus truly loved Jesus, and Joseph Jesus both day and night"].⁶³ As we have already seen, Joseph demonstrates his love for Jesus by his constant concern for his safety. Falsely informed that Jesus has been "strangled" by wild beasts, "Josep it gan rewe sore: / Departi he wende sikerliche / Fram þe childe þat he louede much" ["Joseph was greatly grieved: he thought that he surely was going to have to part from the child that he dearly

⁵⁸ *Life of Saint Anne*, 63, ll. 2420 and 2422–23. Joseph's defeatist attitude here may be compared to his posture in some medieval nativity scenes, in which, in the words of Bernardino of Siena, "foolish painters. . . portray him as a melancholy old man, resting his cheek upon his hand," as quoted by Iris Origo, *The World of San Bernardino* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1963), 38.

⁵⁹ *Altenglische Legenden*, 38, ll. 1097–99.

⁶⁰ *Life of Saint Anne*, 68, ll. 2614 ff.

⁶¹ *Altenglische Legenden*, 51–53.

⁶² *Altenglische Legenden*, 47, ll. 1402 ff. This story is also recounted by the fourteenth-century Italian bishop Petrus de Natalibus in his chapter on "Ioseph sanctissimus" in his *Catalogus sanctorum* (Lyons, 1508), bk. 3, ch. 209, fol. 78 recto. Thomas N. Hall discusses the episode of the beam in "The Miracles of the Lengthened Beam in Apocryphal and Hagiographic Tradition," *Marvels, Monsters, and Miracles: Studies in the Medieval and Early Modern Imaginations*, ed. Timothy S. Jones and David A. Sprunger (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2002), 109–39. For a depiction of this episode in a fifteenth-century illustrated Latin Bible harmony (Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, L. 58. sup., fol. 15v), see figure 3. For a possible depiction of the beam miracle on a fifteenth-century misericord, see Dorothy and Henry Kraus, *The Hidden World of Misericords* (New York: G. Braziller, 1975), 158, fig. 135.

⁶³ *Altenglische Legenden*, 47, ll. 1410–11.

loved”].⁶⁴ Details such as these suggest that the authors of these Middle English poems were attuned to the affection between the fathers and children they saw around them.⁶⁵

In the childhood of Jesus poems, the Jews at first assume that Joseph begot Jesus, but soon begin to question Christ’s parentage when they perceive his wonderful powers and knowledge. On the other hand, they think that Christ is just an ordinary child when they behold his naughtiness.⁶⁶ One of Jesus’s schoolmasters tells him that he would think that he is the Messiah “If it ne ware thi werkes wild” [“if it were not for your wild deeds”].⁶⁷ The masters also reject Jesus as the Messiah because, according to the prophets, “A maydyn withoutyn ony awe / Shuld beryn þe kyng of glorie. / . . . / Old Joseph weddyd Marye” [“a maiden, without doubt, should give birth to the king of glory,” but “Mary is married to old Joseph”].⁶⁸ Some medieval clerical writers explained that it was necessary for Mary to have a spouse because this made it look as if Jesus was born like other children; his belonging to an apparently normal family hid his divinity from the devil.⁶⁹ Bernardino of Siena (d. 1444) likewise notes that Joseph was not only called and reputed to be Christ’s father, “sed etiam tenere oportet quod sanctus vir publice se habebat ad eum verbo, actu et gestu atque cura et imperio, sicut verus pater ad filium suum, et similiter Christus ad eum. Alias aperte innotuisset vicinis et mundo, quod non erat filius eius” [“but it is also necessary to believe that the holy man publicly conducted himself toward him in word, act, bearing, care, and authority as a true father toward his son, and Christ as a son toward his father. Otherwise it would have become openly known to their neighbors and the world that he was not his son”].⁷⁰

⁶⁴ *Altenglische Legenden*, 44, ll. 1295–97.

⁶⁵ Scholars have sometimes misinterpreted Aries as claiming that medieval people did not care about their children, but he clearly states that “The idea of childhood is not to be confused with affection for children. . . . In medieval society this awareness [of the particular nature of childhood] was lacking,” *Centuries of Childhood* 128.

⁶⁶ István Bejczy makes a similar point: the authors of the late-medieval childhood of Jesus narratives emphasize Jesus’s childishness in order to counterbalance the divinity he manifests through his miracles. See “Jesus’ Laughter and the Childhood Miracles: the *Vita rhythmica*,” *South African Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 4 (1994): 50–61.

⁶⁷ “Nachträge,” 333, l. 466.

⁶⁸ *Sammlung Altenglischer Legenden*, ed. Carl Horstmann (Heilbronn: Verlag Gebr. Henniger, 1878), 105, ll. 296–99.

⁶⁹ On the theme of the divine deception of the devil, see also Meyer Schapiro, “‘Muscipula Diaboli,’ The Symbolism of the Mérode Altarpiece,” *Late Antique, Early Christian and Mediaeval Art: Selected Papers* (New York: George Braziller, 1979), 1–11.

⁷⁰ *Opera omnia*, Vol. 7, 25. According to the editor, in this passage Bernardino is quoting Spiritual Franciscan Peter of John Olivi. Bernard of Clairvaux likewise says that it was fitting for Mary to be betrothed to Joseph at the time of her conception so that the mystery of the Incarnation would be kept secret from the demons, *A la louange*, 156 and 158.

Along similar lines, Johannes de Caulibus argues that Christ must have been an ordinary youth after he was found in the temple at age twelve, because if he had continued to inspire wonder in those around him, they would not have been astonished at his wisdom when he started preaching as an adult, or later remarked, when he began his public ministry, that he was merely a carpenter's son.⁷¹ The authors and transmitters of the apocryphal legends were not worried about such inconsistencies between their presentation of the childhood of Christ and what the Bible suggests about his hidden years.

In the legends, the Jews suspect the Christ-child's supernatural origin on account of the wonderful things he says and does. One of the Middle English poems has the Jews correctly deduce that Jesus is not the son of Joseph according to the flesh, by having them tell Joseph: "3owr hawn child he no3t esse, / Ffor he werkes wondrous on many wyse / & in þis cete makes grett maystryse / Hys werkes bers witnesse" ["he is not your own son, for he works wonders in many ways and in this city he performs great feats—his works bear witness thus"].⁷² Mary's crafty remark leads the Jews to believe that Joseph is really Jesus's father: "God wote wele þat I hym bar; / Als oures we sall hym drysse" ["God knows well that I bore him and that we shall bring him up as our own son"].⁷³ Christ's response is also ambiguous, for he does not clearly state who his father is: "bot my fader wyll ware, / Swylke werkes ne wroght I neuer mare" ["if it had not been my father's will, I would never have worked such works"].⁷⁴ This statement may be misinterpreted as meaning that Jesus is doing Joseph's will and so he is the one to blame for Jesus's mischief.

In another Middle English poem, when the Jews ask Joseph whether he is Jesus's father, he actually says no, which leaves the Jews to wonder who the child's father really is.⁷⁵ Ambiguity about Christ's father is also central to the finding in the temple scene described in the second chapter of the gospel of Luke, which formed

⁷¹ *Meditations*, 58. For the Latin, see *Meditaciones*, 67. The canonical gospels describe how the people who had watched Jesus grow up ask, when he begins his public ministry, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" (Mt. 13:55; cf. Lk. 4:22).

⁷² *Life of Saint Anne*, 49, ll. 1863–66.

⁷³ *Life of Saint Anne*, 49, ll. 1868–69.

⁷⁴ *Life of Saint Anne*, 49, ll. 1870–71.

⁷⁵ "Nachträge," 333, l. 425. Scholars have hitherto focused much attention on the theme of Joseph as a cuckold in the biblical plays and the Mérode Tryptic. See, for example, Joseph L. Baird and Lorraine Y. Baird, "Fabliau Form and the Hegge *Joseph's Return*," *The Chaucer Review* 8 (1973): 159–69; Martin W. Walsh, "Divine Cuckold/Holy Fool: The Comic Image of Joseph in the English 'Troubles' Play," *England in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. W. M. Ormrod (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1986), 278–97; and Louise O. Vasvari, "Joseph on the Margin: The Mérode Tryptic and Medieval Spectacle," *Medievalia* 18 (1995): 163–89. Recent studies have suggested that the late-medieval Joseph is a more nuanced character. See Tom Flanigan, "Everyman or Saint? Doubting Joseph in the Corpus Christi Cycles," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England*, Vol. 8 (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996), 19–48; and Paul Payan, "Ridicule? L'image ambiguë de Saint Joseph à la fin du moyen âge," *Médiévales* 39 (2000): 96–111.

the basis of an episode which appears in some of the Middle English childhood of Jesus poems.⁷⁶ Whereas in Luke the twelve-year-old Jesus goes to Jerusalem with his parents to celebrate the Jewish feast and stays behind in the temple, in one of the Middle English poems an adolescent Jesus leaves home and wanders around for quite some time before his parents go in search of him. After looking here and there, his parents find him in Jerusalem arguing with the teachers in the temple. In accordance with Luke, Mary gently chides Jesus: "swete son ihesus, / What ayld þe & why dyd yow so? / Lo, þi fadyr & I wyth mykyll wo / Has soght þe hedyr þus" ["sweet son Jesus, what came over you and why did you do what you did? Behold, your father and I have sought you here with much woe"].⁷⁷

Christ's response, a close translation of Luke, declares the mission given to him by his heavenly Father, and his pious determination to carry it out: "to seke me noȝt ȝow nedes, / Ffor wyt ȝe wele in my fader dedes / All way be me bus" ["you do not need to seek me, for know this well: I must always be about my father's business"].⁷⁸ Mary and Jesus clearly have different fathers in mind.⁷⁹ Unlike Luke, the Middle English poet emphasizes that Christ was a stubborn child by adding some words to Mary's response: "at þi wyll ay yow do; / Bot now come forth with us" ["you always do your will, but now come forth with us"].⁸⁰ In this passage and throughout the apocryphal legends, Joseph's fatherhood is overshadowed by that of the heavenly Father, whose will has a greater claim to Christ's obedience.⁸¹

Joseph's fatherhood is similarly slighted in late-medieval art. As Pamela Sheingorn has shown, some nativity scenes draw attention to the trinitarian relationship existing between God the Father, Mary, and the infant Jesus by means of a triangle of rays connecting the three of them.⁸² Sometimes Joseph is depicted as ignoring the miraculous birth of Jesus or is not even included in the nativity scene, which suggests that the artists consider him a mere human accessory to the

⁷⁶ This scene is also included in the Infancy Gospel of Thomas; see *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas*, trans. Hock, 141 and 143.

⁷⁷ *Life of Saint Anne*, 76, ll. 2931–33. That Mary in these poems wields greater influence over Jesus than Joseph does is probably due to the temple scene in Luke (ch. 2), in which she, rather than Joseph, reprimands the twelve-year-old Jesus.

⁷⁸ *Life of Saint Anne*, 76, ll. 2935–37.

⁷⁹ Similarly, in the Hegge play of *Joseph's Return*, a pregnant Mary tells Joseph about the paternity he shares with Jesus's heavenly father: "This childe is Goddys and ȝoure" ["this child is God's and yours"] *The N-Town Play: Cotton MS Vespasian D.8*, ed. Stephen Spector. EETS, ss 11 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 125, l. 42.

⁸⁰ *Life of Saint Anne*, 76, ll. 2939–40.

⁸¹ Medieval theologians and canonists raised the question of the sense in which Joseph can be said to be the father of Jesus despite his not having begotten him. On this issue, see Francis L. Filas, *Joseph and Jesus: A Theological Study of Their Relationship* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1952), chapters 2 and 3; and Irven M. Resnick, "Marriage in Medieval Culture: Consent Theory and The Case of Joseph and Mary," *Church History* 69 (2000): 350–71; here 368.

⁸² "The Maternal Behavior of God: Divine Father as Fantasy Husband," *Medieval Mothering* 77–99.

real Holy Family.⁸³ It should also be noted that, in the same period, the revelations of St. Bridget of Sweden caused a number of artists to portray Joseph more favorably. According to Bridget, Joseph enters the cave where Mary has instantaneously given birth to Jesus soon after the event and kneels down before the babe in reverent adoration, as does Bridget the visionary in some depictions of the nativity.⁸⁴

Somewhat surprisingly, at the same time that derogatory images of Joseph were being put forth in the later Middle Ages, some influential churchmen began drawing people's attention to the sacred character of the family in which Jesus grew up. For example, the thirteenth-century Dominican Jacobus de Voragine reports a vision in which a sinner is told that Joseph will perfect, Mary enlighten, and the child Jesus save him.⁸⁵ Jean Gerson (d. 1429) referred to the Holy Family as a "trinitas" on more than one occasion, and expressed his sense of inadequacy in speaking of this mystery: "Cuperem mihi verba suppeterent ad explicandum tam altum et absconditum a saeculis mysterium, tam admirandam venerandamque trinitatem Jesu, Joseph et Mariae" ["I wish that I had words to explain such a lofty mystery, hidden from the ages, that so wonderful and venerable trinity of Jesus, Joseph, and Mary"].⁸⁶ Gerson goes on to note that Joseph was the head of Mary and that she exercised authority over Jesus, thereby implying that Joseph ruled over Jesus.⁸⁷ Christ's subjection to his parents is a cause of wonder for

⁸³ In early medieval (and Byzantine) nativity scenes, artists represented Joseph as an old man turned aside from the nativity or sleeping in order to signify that he was not the real father of Jesus. See André Grabar, *Christian Iconography: A Study of Its Origins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 130. This iconography persisted into the later Middle Ages, as can be seen in a nativity scene of Giotto. Ruth Mellinkoff closes her book with a painting in which Joseph is leaning against a shed with his back completely turned to the newborn Jesus, *Outcasts*, Vol. 2, fig. xi.41.

⁸⁴ On the influence that Bridget's vision of the nativity had on late-medieval art, see Henry Cornell, *The Iconography of the Nativity of Christ* (Uppsala: A.-B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1924), ch. 1; and Gertrud Schiller, *The Iconography of Christian Art*, trans. Janet Seligman, Vol. 1 (London: Lund Humphries, 1971), 78–80. For Bridget's revelation of the nativity, see *The Liber Celestis*, 485–57. For the Latin text, see *Den Heligas Birgittas Revelaciones: Bok VII*, ed. Birger Bergh (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksel, 1967), 187–90.

⁸⁵ *Legenda aurea*, ed. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni, Vol. 2 (Tavarnuzze: SISMEL, 1998), 743–43. Cynthia Hahn refers to this passage in her article on the Trinitarian imagery in the Merode Triptych: "Joseph Will Perfect, Mary Enlighten and Jesus Save Thee": The Holy Family as Marriage Model in the Merode Triptych," *The Art Bulletin* 68 (1986): 54–66.

⁸⁶ *Oeuvres*, Vol. 2, 169; "Sermon Jacob autem," *Oeuvres*, Vol. 5 (Paris, 1963), 358. Rather than place Mary's name before that of Joseph, and Jesus's before both of theirs, Gerson puts the name of Joseph first, as noted by Herlihy, "The Making of the Medieval Family: Symmetry, Structure, and Sentiment," *Women, Family and Society in Medieval Europe: Historical Essays, 1978–1991*, ed. A. Molho (Providence, Rhode Island and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995), 152. Herlihy says that medieval families were "invited to aspire" to this "cultural and emotional ideal," the *concordia charitatis*, in the words of Gerson.

⁸⁷ *Oeuvres*, Vol. 5, 358. Similarly, in her revelations to Bridget, Mary informs the visionary of her

Gerson: "subditus fabro is qui fabricavit auroram et solum; subditus feminae textrinae cui flectitur omne genu, coelestium, terrestrium, et infernorum (cf. Phil. 2:10)" ["he who made the dawn and the sun was subject to a carpenter, he, to whom is bent every knee in heaven, on earth, and in hell, was subject to a woman who was a weaver"].⁸⁸ Bernard of Clairvaux similarly marveled that Jesus "erat. . . subditus illis. Quis, quibus? Deus hominibus: Deus, inquam, cui Angeli subditi sunt, cui Principatus et Potestates oboediunt, subditus erat Mariae; nec tantum Mariae, sed etiam Ioseph propter Mariam" ["was obedient to them. Who? God. To whom? To men. God, I repeat, to whom the angels are subject. . . was obedient to Mary. And not only Mary but to Joseph, too, for Mary's sake"].⁸⁹ Like Gerson and Bernard, the apocryphal legends emphasize the primacy of the bond between Mary and Jesus and the dependency of the father-son relationship upon that bond. Yet, as I have shown, they tend to focus on the tenuousness of that relationship.

Far from idealizing the Holy Family as a reflection of the Holy Trinity, as in Bartolomeo Esteban Murillo's seventeenth-century painting "The Trinities of Heaven and Earth," the apocryphal legends present a human family in which a rambunctious child creates problems that must be dealt with by his parents. Medieval families who heard these legends might have been encouraged by the thought that difficulties were not lacking for the Holy Family, nor the grace needed to cope with them. After all, the Holy Family manages to survive despite all the difficulties it encounters. While medieval parents and children might have wondered at the Holy Family's pious disagreement about fetching water, they would not have been able to relate to it very well. Whereas Vincent Ferrer recommends that children imitate the boy Jesus, the apocryphal narrators suggest ways in which parents should and should not deal with their unruly children. Despite their differences, both Ferrer and the apocryphal narrators can be said to

wifely submission to Joseph: "Bot all if I was ordende to be in wirshipe aboue all opir creature and all men opir þan mi son, neuripeles 3et serued I Ioseph, and ordeinde for him þat was nedefull to him, and mi son was laweli and soiet to vs bothe" [but even though I was ordained to be honored above every creature and person except for my son, nevertheless I served Joseph and helped him with his necessities, and my son was lowly and subject to both of us], *Liber Celestis*, 488. For the Latin, see *Den Heligas Birgittas Revelaciones: Bok VII* 194.

⁸⁸ *Oeuvres*, Vol. 5, 358. Like other medieval Latin writers, Gerson uses *faber* and *fabricavit*—words which have the same root—in order to underline the humility manifested by the Christ-child's submission to his father. Yrjö Hirn cites Sicardus Cremonensis and William Durandus as examples of medieval religious writers who saw in Joseph the carpenter a reflection of God the creator, *The Sacred Shrine: A Study of the Poetry and Art of the Catholic Church* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 270 and 518. Ambrose of Milan and the thirteenth-century Franciscan poet Walter of Wimborne are two other writers who noted the significance of Joseph being a *faber*. For the passage in Ambrose, see *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, in *Opera, Pars IV*, ed. Marcus Adriaen. Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, 12 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1957), 76; for the verses in Walter, see *Marie carmina*, in *The Poems of Walter of Wimborne*, ed. A. G. Rigg (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978), stanza 311, ll. 3–4.

⁸⁹ *A la louange de la Vierge Marie* 122 and 124. For the translation, I cite *Magnificat*, 11.

practice "the art of making religion relevant," though in different ways.⁹⁰ In this respect, and in their mutual attempt to satisfy medieval people's curiosity about the hidden life of Jesus, apocryphal narrators and medieval religious writers like Vincent Ferrer are not that different from each other.

A modern audience may find Joseph of the apocryphal legends comical, but other reactions to his portrayal are possible. In the fifteenth-century an anonymous French Celestine monk considered a text he refers to as the *Livre des enfances Jhesucrist* blasphemous because it portrayed Joseph reprimanding his foster-son "comme malvaiz garçon" ["as a bad boy"], and Jesus responding to "monseigneur saint Joseph orgueilleusement" ["reverend St. Joseph proudly"] and menacingly.⁹¹ Yet in England, in the same century, a Middle English poet defended his portrayal of Jesus as a troublesome child by arguing that this is the way children normally behave and that Jesus was a real human being.⁹² He cites St. Paul's statement that when he was a child he behaved childishly (1 Cor. 13:11). Whereas for the pious Frenchman the apocryphal Christ-child was too much like normal children, for the earthy Englishman it was an act of piety to acknowledge the humanity of Jesus.

⁹⁰ I borrow this phrase from V. A. Kolve, *The Play Called Corpus Christi* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 252.

⁹¹ For the text, see Max Lieberman, "Saint Joseph, Jean Gerson et Pierre d'Ailly dans un manuscrit de 1464," *Cahiers de Joséphologie* 20 (1972): 5-110, 253-61; here 50-51.

⁹² *Life of St. Anne*, 89, ll. 3433-444.

Karen K. Jambeck

(Western Connecticut State University)

The *Tretiz* of Walter of Bibbesworth:

Cultivating the Vernacular

Le tretiz ki munseignur Gauter de Bithesweth fist a madame Dyonise de Mountechensi pur apprise de langage. E ço est a saver de primere tens ke home neistra ou tut le langage par sa nature en sa juvente, puis tut le fraunceis cum il encurt en age e en estate de husbondrie e manaungerie . . . (Prologue 1–4;¹ The treatise that my lord Walter of Bibbesworth made for madame Dyonisia of Mountechensy for language instruction. That is to say, from the time that man is first born from that moment all the language through his natural state in his youth, then all the French as he advances to the age and station of estate and household management . . .).²

Thus begins the prologue to a thirteenth-century insular text known as the *Tretiz*, or *Treatise*. This rhymed treatise, or book [*livre*], as Bibbesworth refers to it elsewhere (l. 834), is divided into twenty-three sections that focus primarily on the language of estate and household management.³ A prefatory letter states that

¹ Walter de Bibbesworth, *Le Tretiz*, ed. William Rothwell (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1990), 3. Subsequent references, drawn from this edition, are cited in the text by line number.

² Unless otherwise noted, the translations are mine. In the case of Bibbesworth's rhymed text, I have tried to remain faithful to the lexicon, but the renderings are sometimes freely construed in order to convey the flavor of Bibbesworth's verse and word play.

³ William Rothwell, for instance, links the lexicon of Bibbesworth's work to that of several Anglo-French treatises on estate management in Dorothea Oschinsky's *Walter of Henley and Other Treatises on Estate Management and Accounting*. See his "Anglo-French and Middle English Vocabulary in *Femina Nova*," *Medium Aevum* 69 (2000): 34–58; here 36. The purpose of Bibbesworth's *Treatise* has been described variously as the following examples illustrate: Because the author included English glosses in this treatise for instructing children of the nobility, "il est evident que leur langue maternelle était l'anglais" (Annie Owen, ed., *Le Traite de Walter de Bibbesworth sur la langue française* [Paris, 1929; rpt. Geneva: Slatkine, 1977], 6). During the thirteenth-century transition "from English to French as the language of the upper classes," Bibbesworth wrote his *Traite* "for the [English-speaking] children of a fairly important and very wealthy baronial family"; this "manual of instruction" was designed to help them learn French "as a second language" (A. C. Baugh, "The Date of Walter of Bibbesworth's *Traite*," *Festschrift für Walther Fischer* [Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1959], 21–33;

the work has been composed at the request of a lady, apparently Madame de Mountchensy: "pur ceo ke vous me pryastes ke jeo meyse en escryst pur vos enfaunz acune apryse de fraunceys en breues paroles jeo l'ay fet solum ceo ke jeo ay aprys . . ." (Because you have requested that I put into writing for your children some instruction in French, in short words, I have done so in accordance with the way I learned . . .).⁴ This letter and the general tone of the *Treatise* suggest that the recipient is amenable to this approach and that she will share the attitudes expressed in the work. These words would seem to imply that the lady shares in, or is open to, the principles that Bibbesworth sets forth. Similarly, his comment that the *Treatise* follows the way in which the author learned suggests that this approach to instruction was applied in another household and that Bibbesworth,

of Walter of Bibbesworth's *Trate*," *Festschrift für Walther Fischer* [Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1959], 21–33; here 21). The *Treatise* "is not for beginners"; it has "the air of a teacher's manual rather than that of a school text-book for the use of children." It appears that Bibbesworth "is writing for grown people who already have some French, and that he is providing them with teaching material [which they might absorb] so that they may pass on the French language to children who are growing up in the linguistic climate of English" (William Rothwell, "The Teaching of French in Medieval England," *Modern Language Review* 63 [1968]: 37–46; here 38). Lady Montchensy "had Walter Bibbesworth as her tutor" (W. J. Frank Davies, *Teaching Reading in Early England* [London: Pitman House, 1973], 52). The English dedicatee of the *Treatise*, who knows at least some basic French grammar and vocabulary, thinks in English and needs to learn many additional terms (i.e., "le vocabulaire pratique de la vie quotidienne—le français des Français"—along with "glosses for difficult words") so that she can teach these terms to her children" (William Rothwell, "A quelle époque a-t-on cessé de parler français en Angleterre?" *Mélanges de Philologie offerts à Charles Camproux* [Montpellier: Université Paul-Valéry, 1978], vol. 2, 1075–1089; here 1083–1084). Given the shifting linguistic situation in thirteenth-century England, "what Bibbesworth's English patroness needed, in order to make her children competent users of French, was the specialized vocabulary they would have to master for the running of their estates once they had come of age" (William A. Rothwell, "A Mis-judged Author and a Mis-used Text: Walter of Bibbesworth and His *Tretiz*," *Modern Language Review* 77 [1982]: 282–293; here 282). The concepts and terms that Bibbesworth includes are "highly technical and far removed from everyday use"; therefore, "the intention and contents of Bibbesworth's text-book" do not lead to a conclusion "that French was an acquired language in later thirteenth century England" (Luis Iglesias-Rabade, "Multi-Lingual Education in England 1200–1500," *Studia Neophilologica* 67 [1995]: 185–195; here 188). As "the number of French-speaking families in England diminished over the years, familiarity with the language declined, but its continuing use amongst the landed gentry in managing their estates and its enduring position as a language of record in the steadily growing area of administration meant that it had to be taught" (William Rothwell, "The Teaching and Learning of French in Later Medieval England," *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* 111, 1 [2001]: 1–18; here 6). The "moral advice and word selection [in the *Treatise*] suggest a particular although not exclusively female audience"; the impetus for this work was educating "Dionysia's young stepdaughter, Joan," who was to marry William de Valence, the French half-brother of Henry III. Bibbesworth's "pedagogical work," which was "taught by her stepmother, someone already familiar with the language and some of the tasks described," would enable Joan to gain an appropriate level of French in order to oversee her future household" (Kathleen Kennedy, "Le *Tretiz* of Walter of Bibbesworth," *Medieval Literature for Children*, ed. Daniel T. Kline [New York and London: Routledge, 2003], 131–142; here 132–33).

⁴ The letter, which begins, "Cheresoer," appears in several of the manuscripts. It is printed among the variants in Annie Owen's edition (44).

who is believed to have been a prosperous knight of Essex,⁵ may be drawing on experiences that he recalls from his own youth.

The following analysis, while drawing on several valuable linguistic studies of the *Tretiz*, especially those of William Rothwell, constitutes a new interrogation of the text, asking what do the language and the pedagogical approaches in this text reveal about attitudes toward childhood and children in the context of family. Specifically, viewed in the light of recent research concerning childhood and family in the Middle Ages,⁶ Bibbesworth's treatise reveals significant insights concerning children and childhood as a stage of individual development; childhood as a time of preparation for future roles in life, in this case, becoming part of a landed aristocracy; and the acquisition of language and uses of vernacular language and literacy in a thirteenth-century family.

In discussing this period of maturation and enculturation, the *Treatise* describes the child's developmental progress—changing needs, increasing levels of ability, and emerging interests—in ways that would be recognizable to developmental biologists and psychologists today.⁷ For instance, Bibbesworth points out that the infant should be wrapped in “swaddling clothes” and provided with a cradle and *bercere* (“rocker”).⁸ When he describes the natural progress from creeping to walking, Bibbesworth counsels that an older boy or girl (*garszoun* or *garce*) should follow the toddler to make sure he or she does not stumble and come to harm. So,

⁵ Baugh, “The Date of Walter of Bibbesworth's *Traite*,” 21–28; and Josiah C. Russell, “Some Thirteenth-Century Anglo-Norman Writers,” *Modern Philology* 28, 3 (Feb. 1931): 257–69; here 265–66.

⁶ For a comprehensive overview of the field, see Albrecht Classen, “Phillippe Aries and the Consequences: History of Childhood, Family Relations, and Personal Emotions: Where Do We Stand Today?” in this volume.

⁷ For overviews on the life stage of childhood, which sometimes includes and sometimes is differentiated from infancy, youth, and/or adolescence, see Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 21–120 and 162–253; and Daniel T. Kline, “Medieval Children's Literature: Problems, Possibilities, Parameters,” *Medieval Literature for Children*, ed. Daniel T. Kline (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 1–11; here 5. On youth, see the perceptive collection of essays and introduction to *Youth in the Middle Ages*, eds. P. J. P. Goldberg and Felicity Riddy (York: York Medieval Press, 2004). For medieval terminology referring to stages of childhood and adolescence, see Edward James, “Childhood and Youth in the Early Middle Ages,” *Youth in the Middle Ages*, eds. P. J. P. Goldberg and Felicity Riddy (York: York Medieval Press, 2004), 1–23. On the psychological insights of some medieval writers, see Shahar, 21–22, and Classen, “Phillippe Aries.” John Bartlett points out that in thirteenth-century England coming of age and becoming a knight occurred at the same time, at twenty-one. If a boy was a ward, he “could not take possession of his father's possessions” until he was twenty-one, at which time he could “hold land and be made a knight” (*England Under the Angevin Kings: 1075–1225* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000], 538). Similarly the canonical age for marriage was twelve for a girl and fourteen for a boy (Scott L. Waugh, *The Lordship of England. Royal Wardships and Marriages in English Society and Politics. 1217–1327* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988], 15–52; here 56).

⁸ On the practice of providing the child with a rocker, or rockster, to rock the baby's cradle, see Nicholas Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of English Kings and the Aristocracy* (London: Methuen, 1984), 12.

too, when the baby begins drooling and, implicitly, teething, he or she should be provided with a bib (ll. 5–19). Similarly, the *Treatise* also describes foods that are appropriate for the very young.⁹ For instance, when the young child (“juvene enfaunt”) reaches for bread in the morning, Bibbesworth advises, one should give him or her a piece. Other appropriate foods for children of this age include eggs and bits of apple, without skin or core (ll. 195–214).

Having described the earliest physical needs, the treatise addresses the child’s growing abilities and interests. Thus the third section begins: “Vestez vous dras, beaus duz enfauns” (l. 183; Put on your clothes, pretty, sweet children).¹⁰ And gradually the child’s activities, which have been restricted to the interior of the house, move outdoors. There is, for example, a reference to playing at tops in the road (“En la rue juez au toup” [l. 37]). In other instances, there is an apparent appreciation for child’s play: “Le jour devient trop beaus e cler; / Alom dedure ou banoer / Au verget . . .” (ll. 638–40; The day is so beautiful and bright; let’s go play or amuse ourselves in the garden . . .). Shortly thereafter comes a similar invitation: “Aloms ore juer a boys” (l. 712; Let’s go now to play in the woods).

In the context of toys, play, and games that have been identified by scholars of the history of childhood,¹¹ the treatise suggests additional items and activities that might be associated with play, although they are not specified as such by Bibbesworth. For instance, Nicholas Orme’s references to children building houses and castles in the sand or with sticks resonate with Bibbesworth’s description of constructing a house (ll. 937–96).¹² Similarly, in describing medieval toys, Orme observes that an elaborate toy cart and miniature castle were made for the sons of Edward I; again Bibbesworth’s lengthy description of a cart (ll. 913–36) may be a plaything or an actual vehicle.¹³ Some of Bibbesworth’s allusions to activities like setting a table (ll. 1021–32) and hunting (ll. 263–70)¹⁴ exist in an ambiguous context, perhaps referring to play that emulates adult activity, or perhaps to normal adult

⁹ There is no mention of nursing or of a wet nurse; however, the child seems to have been weaned.

¹⁰ In the section on dressing, Bibbesworth distinguishes *ceintez* (“put on a belt”) and *enceintez* (“you are pregnant”); he goes on to say that the child should not say the latter, “Kar femme est par home enceinte” (l. 189; because a woman is impregnated by a man). Nicholas Orme observes some cultural differences between the medieval world and today concerning sex and childhood: “It was also a world where lack of privacy may have made adult sexuality more obvious, and where some aspects of sex may have been more openly shared with children than is usually so today” (*Medieval Children* [New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001], 161).

¹¹ See, for example, Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children*, 163–97; Nicholas Orme, “The Culture of Children in Medieval England,” *Past and Present* 148 (Aug. 1995): 48–88; and Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, 104–05, 223.

¹² Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry* 35–36.

¹³ *From Childhood to Chivalry*, 35–36.

¹⁴ For children’s playing at war, hunting, and “housekeeping,” see Orme, *Medieval Children*, 81–183, and 172–73.

occupations in which a child might participate or may have observed. The treatise's extended description of fishing (ll. 513–44) also falls into this category.

The importance of childhood as an attenuated preparation for adulthood is central to Bibbesworth's treatise, which assumes an active parental role in the process. As members of the landed aristocracy, men and women had to oversee their households and estates. As Scott Waugh observes, landholding, which encompassed "the acquisition, preservation, and cultivation of property, was a central concern of medieval England"; for the upper ranks of society, land was the basis of status and power.¹⁵ In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Susan Crane notes, landholding was a central concern of England's "baronial society," and these aristocrats "defended their [lands] by bequest and litigation."¹⁶ In addition, marriage and family played an important role in negotiating, preserving, and maintaining lordship and estates; peer networks too were significant.

Social status and political power lay in the hands of a relatively few men: the highest level comprised the magnates, about a hundred "earls, barons, wealthy knights, and ministers, who served on the king's council, performed the higher functions of law and administration, led his forces in war, and whose wealth and power covered the kingdom as a whole." At a lower rank were "knights and wealthy gentry" whose power and influence generally was restricted to the local or county level. Despite a difference in status, however, these aristocrats could and did interact with each other.¹⁷

While careful provisions were traditionally made for the eldest son, abundant evidence shows that younger sons and daughters were also provided for, and mothers sometimes made bequests of inherited land or marriage portions to their children.¹⁸ While many have argued that lineage was primary, there is also a growing body of evidence indicating that affection between parent and child was also a factor in such bequests.¹⁹ In addition, Waugh points out that "At any given time, a significant portion of the elite's wealth was in the hands of heiresses or widows."²⁰ It is within these parameters that Baugh's generally accepted identification of recipient of Bibbesworth's *Treatise* as Dionysia de Munchensy, the

¹⁵ "Land was not owned by a family; it was held by an individual as a tenement in return for specific services," for instance, military service (Waugh, *The Lordship of England* 15–52, especially 3–4).

¹⁶ *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 23.

¹⁷ Waugh, *The Lordship of England* 17.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 3.

¹⁹ An example would seem to be William Marshal, who is said to have left to an unmarried daughter "30 *librates* of land and 200 marks to ensure that she would prosper" (Waugh, *The Lordship of England*, 54). Carol Neel locates the origin of "the family as we know it, a bi-generational household of blood relations close-knit by economic necessity and emotional attachment," in the European Middle Ages . . . ("Introduction," *Medieval Families: Perspectives on Marriage, Household, and Children*, ed. Carol Neel [Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2004], 13).

²⁰ Waugh, *The Lordship of England* 21.

widow of Warin de Mountchensy, or Munchensy, baron of Swanscombe, Kent, is to be considered. Madame de Mountchensy's immediate family included a step son, John; a step daughter, Joan; and William, the son of Dionysia and Warin.²¹

As members of the landed aristocracy, men and women had to oversee their households and estates. During the century following Bibbesworth's, Christine de Pizan, in her *Treasury of the City of Ladies*, offers advice concerning "How ladies and young women who live on their estates ought to manage their households and estates":

Because barons and still more commonly knights and squires and gentlemen travel and go off to the wars, their wives should be wise and sound administrators and manage their affairs well It is proper for such a lady or young woman to be thoroughly knowledgeable about the laws related to fiefs, sub-fiefs, quit rents, . . . and all those sorts of things that are within the jurisdiction of the lordship, according to the customs of the region, so that no one can deceive her about them.

. . . She will see [the accounts] often and wish to know how they are managed in regard to her vassals so that they are not being cheated or incommoded unreasonably In addition, she will do well to be a very good manager of the estate and to know all about the work on the land and at what time and in which season one ought perform what operations.²²

Similarly, an introduction to Walter of Henley's *Housbanderie* (c. 1276–1290) explains that the work is designed "to teach those who have lands and tenements and may not know how to keep all the points of husbandry, as the tillage of the land and the keeping of cattle, from which great wealth may come to those who will hear this teaching and then do as is found written down." Henley's treatise also advises keeping close track of lands and produce, including ways to estimate productivity of livestock and land, for instance what crops to plant and cultivate and "how much a plow can plow yearly": "Si vos terres sunt departies en treis, la une partie a yvernage e lautre partie a qaremelle la terce a waret, duncqe est la carue [de terre de] ix ^{xx} acres."²³ [If your arable landes be parted into thre partes,

²¹ Baugh, "The Date of Walter of Bibbesworth's *Traite*," 21–33. The aristocratic nuclear family in England at this time is thought to have consisted of two parents and three or four children. See, for example, Bartlett, *England Under the Angevin Kings* 30.

²² In addition, the lady "should know which way is the best for the furrows to go according to the lay of the land and according to whether it is in a dry or damp region. She should see that the furrows are straight and well made and of the right depth and sown at exactly the right time with such grains as are best for the land. And likewise she should know all about the work of the vineyard if it is a wine-growing area." (*The Treasury of the City of Ladies or the Book of the Three Virtues*, trans. Sarah Lawson [London and New York: Penguin, 1985], 130). See also the important article by Rowena Archer, "How ladies . . . who live on their manors ought to manage their households and estates': Women as Landholders and Administrators in the Later Middle Ages," *Woman Is a Worthy Wight: Women in English Society c. 1200–1500*, ed. P. J. P. Goldberg (Gloucester and Wolfeboro Falls, NH: Alan Sutton, 1992), 149–81.

²³ *Walter of Henley and Other Treatises on Estate Management and Accounting*, ed. Dorothea Oschinsky

one for winter corne, an other to lenten corne, and the thyrd to fallow, then is the ploughe lande nyne score acres.]²⁴

In addition to explaining the language of estate management, the *Treatise* alludes briefly to social, moral, and religious values appropriate to the gentleman or gentlewoman. Brief references to social conventions include advice on the use of clean white table linens and a negative view of coughing, belching, slavering, and vomiting at the table. In terms of morality, the *Treatise* speaks against wanton women and drunkenness. Similarly, it contains passing references to Christianity—minsters or churches, bishops, priests, Adam and Eve, *seint Jorge* (St. George), and Christian and Jew—indicating that its audience has had at least general religious instruction.

Still, the central concern in Bibbesworth's *Treatise* is to prepare children and youths for their adult roles and responsibilities as aristocratic landholders by inculcating appropriate language. For Bibbesworth, this learning begins early and continues throughout childhood and adolescence (Prologue). Affirming that language is natural to humans (ll. 248), Bibbesworth indicates that the French set forth in the treatise has additional dimensions that require special cultivation. It goes beyond the common language that "everyone knows" ("Du fraunceis ki chescun seit dire" [l. 82]). The treatise focuses therefore on proper or correct language, which for Bibbesworth means French as it is employed in England among the upper ranks of English aristocracy: "le dreit ordre en parler e en respundre qe nuls gentils homme coveint saver" (Prologue; The correct order in speaking and responding necessary for every gentleman to know). As Bibbesworth emphasizes, "Coveint parler proprement" (l. 220; It is necessary to speak properly).

Concerns about language were very real in thirteenth-century England, for language was closely tied to social, political, and economic realities. This awareness must also have been heightened by two features of Bibbesworth's time: first, the fluid linguistic situation in thirteenth-century England; and second, the social implications of the French language in England. In twelfth- and thirteenth-century England, several languages—notably English, French, Celtic languages, and Latin—co-existed. This linguistic situation has often been described as "diglossic"; that is, Latin was the "high language," the medium used for "official, state, educational, religious and written purposes," while the others were "low" languages, purely, or primarily, spoken vernaculars, existing in considerable dialectal variety. From 1066 to roughly the mid thirteenth century, insular French, known as Anglo-Norman or Anglo-French, "remained a true vernacular within limited social groups." Gradually it achieved the status of a second "high" language, achieving increased prestige through its association with writing

(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 312–13.

²⁴ Ibid.

(especially in the fields of literature, law, and administration), education, and social rank."²⁵

Once Anglo-French became a second "high language," the linguistic situation in England was triglossic."²⁶ Additionally, during this period, bi- and tri-lingualism are thought to have been relatively common among those at the upper strata of society, although most likely the majority of the population spoke only one language—English.²⁷ Given the coexistence of multiple languages along with individual bi- or tri-lingualism, there would be instances of linguistic borrowing and code-switching.²⁸

It is at this juncture, as Anglo-French is making a transition from "true vernacular" to the status of a language of record and literature, that Bibbesworth's *Treatise* seems to have been composed.

At this time, moreover, baronial and knightly estates constituted complex linguistic communities. The largest estates, which were known as "honors" and "held by military tenure," consisted of "dozens of manors or holdings scattered across counties and intermingled with the lands of other lords."²⁹ During the period under consideration, the lord might speak French or French and English; he might also have some basic grasp of Latin.³⁰ His wife might be Anglophone, Francophone, or bilingual. The lord or lady, or their designees, oversaw manorial

²⁵ D. A. Trotter, "Anglo-Norman," *Languages in Britain and Ireland*, ed. Glanville Price (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 197–206; here 201. For a general overview of diglossia, see Harold F. Schiffman, "Diglossia as a Sociolinguistic Situation," *The Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, ed. Florian Coulmas (London: Blackwell, 1996), 205–16.

²⁶ Trotter, "Anglo-Norman," 201.

²⁷ Ibid. 197–206. On the differences between Anglo-Norman and Anglo-French, see Mildred K. Pope, *From Latin to Modern French with Especial Attention to Anglo-Norman Phonology and Morphology* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1934), 451–61; and Trotter, "Anglo-Norman," 197–206. On bi- and tri-lingualism in medieval England, see also Ian Short, "On Bilingualism in Anglo-Norman England," *Romance Philology* 33 (1980): 467–79; Michael Richter, *Sprache und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter: Untersuchungen zur mündlichen Kommunikation in England von der Mitte des elften bis zum Beginn des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts*. Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters, 18 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1979); and Tony Hunt, *Teaching and Learning Latin in Thirteenth-Century England*. 3 vols. (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991), vol. 1, 13.

²⁸ Code-switching entails an individual's "producing discourse" that "includes morphemes from two or more varieties" (e.g., languages or dialects) in his or her "linguistic repertoire" (Carol Myers-Scotton, "Codeswitching," *Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, ed. Florian Coulmas (Oxford and New York: Blackwell, 1997), 217–37; here 217. For a discussion of code-switching and code-mixing in Bibbesworth's *Treatise*, see Kathleen E. Kennedy, "Changes in Society and Language Acquisition: The French Language in England. 1215–1480," *English Language Notes* 35, 3 (March 1998): 1–19.

²⁹ Bartlett, *England Under the Angevin Kings* 219.

³⁰ On Latin literacy and vernacular literacy among the aristocracy, see, for example, Ralph V. Turner, "The Miles Literatus in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century England: How Rare a Phenomenon?" *The American Historical Review* 83, 4 (Oct. 1978): 928–45; M. B. Parkes, "The Literacy of the Laity," *The Medieval World*, eds. D. Daiches and A. Thorlby (London: Aldus, 1973), 555–77; and M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record. England from 1066–1307* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

affairs, which required dealing with estate officials, who might speak English, French, or other languages,³¹ and with household servants and other laborers, who probably spoke English. Chaplains and clerks associated with the household might have a command of Latin along with one or more of the vernaculars. Additionally, the women who served as nurses and “rockers” for noble children were often Anglophone, and in their early years, noble children might well speak English, at least until they started communicating with a French-speaking parent or parents. For children growing up in this complex linguistic situation, language acquisition had a special dimension.

It is at this nexus of language, children, and family that Bibbesworth’s treatise holds particular interest because of the attitudes and practices it reveals. As noted earlier, the prefatory letter and the tone of the *Treatise* imply that Madame is open to and perhaps shares the attitudes expressed in the work. And as noted earlier, Bibbesworth recalls that the approach set forth in his work parallels his own experience with learning, implying that the practices extend beyond a single family. Indeed, the continuing popularity of his work indicates that others found his approach congenial. Significantly, many of the attitudes and practices exemplified in the *Treatise* would be endorsed by modern-day scholars of child language and language acquisition,³² and in light of present-day research and theory, Bibbesworth’s work can be seen to incorporate strategies and techniques that enhance the acquisition of language by a child, especially as it exemplifies the following principles: language acquisition is an innate, biologically-triggered behavior with a relatively predictable timetable; language acquisition occurs within an interactive context; and language and language play can be deployed so as to capture attention and interest and make words and expressions memorable.

Acquiring a language is a gradual evolutionary process the beginnings of which are tied to physical and psychological development; this biologically-triggered behavior generally occurs in normal children at the age of about twelve months

³¹ For instance, in Wales, Ireland, and the border areas, Celtic languages would be common.

³² Here *language acquisition* is understood as “a subconscious process that leads to functional command of the rules of language, but not necessarily to conscious knowledge about that language or its rules. What children do in the home is acquire their native language.” In the course of this process a child “communicat[es] with adults and others” and gradually “abstract[s] the patterns” of a language. Thus “while learning about the world through language, the child simultaneously learns language and learns about language.” For optimal success, the language the child encounters “must be rich enough to provide raw data for the abstraction of patterns and the construction of rules” (Constance Weaver, *Reading Process and Practice*, 2nd ed. [Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1994], 65). See also Jean Aitchison, *The Articulate Mammal*, 3rd ed. (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 70–72. While a survey of the vast scholarship of child language and language acquisition exceeds the scope of this discussion, the following works provide useful overviews: Paul Fletcher and Brian MacWhinney, *The Handbook of Child Language* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995); and William Ritchie and Tej Bhatia, *Handbook of Child Language Acquisition* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1999). See also Suzanne Romaine, *Bilingualism*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), especially chapter 5, “The Bilingual Child.”

and follows a trajectory of predictable phases or linguistic "milestones." In this connection it is notable that the *Treatise* links the onset of language with the time of teething and toddling.³³ This is the time, according to Bibbesworth, that the caregiver, presumably Madame de Mountechensy, speak to the baby in French, naming the parts of the body: "E[n] fraunceis lui devez dire / Cum primes deit sun cors descrivre . . . (ll. 23–28 ; In French you must say to him [or her] as you first begin to describe his [or her] body). In addition to naming the parts of the body correctly, she must also include the appropriate article, saying, for example, "my head" ("ma teste" or "moun chef") (ll. 23–28). Bibbesworth adds that such a beginning is important so that the child will ultimately speak in a cultivated or appropriate way ("seit meux apris") and will not be scorned or ridiculed ("escharnis") by others (ll. 23–28). Although the *Treatise* is not a grammar textbook based upon and organized by formal rules, the work does illustrate a kind of informal progression that would accommodate and enhance a child's normal acquisition of French phonemes, morphemes, lexicon, and syntax. Significantly, current research has demonstrated that children can begin acquiring words, in the sense of understanding, at the age of five to seven months, and many children have a vocabulary of about fifty words by the age of two.³⁴ Similarly, research on language acquisition has demonstrated that children begin learning inflections and "little words" like articles between the ages of two and three.³⁵

Throughout the *Treatise* Bibbesworth insists on the need for correct and appropriate language, which must be acquired at an early age. His beliefs in this respect are coincident with Pierre Bourdieu's latter-day concept of "linguistic *habitus*": certain features of accent, grammar, and vocabulary function as "indices of the social positions of speakers and reflections of the quantities of linguistic capital (and other capital) which they possess." Possessing features associated with this linguistic capital enables speakers "to exploit the system of [linguistic] differences to their advantage and thereby secure a profit of distinction."³⁶ According to Bourdieu, this *habitus* is "impalpably inculcated through a long and slow process of acquisition" in which childhood experiences are particularly

³³ Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, observes that many medieval authors saw a connection between the emergence of teeth and the commencement of speech (92). Modern research too places the child's production of one-word utterances at about twelve months and observes rough correspondences between developing motor activities and speech. See, for example, Aitchison, *The Articulate Mammal*, 75–79 and 84.

³⁴ Karla K. McGregor, "Developmental Dependencies between Lexical Semantics and Reading," *Handbook of Language and Literacy. Development and Disorders*, eds. C. Addison Stone et al. (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 2004), 302–17; here 302.

³⁵ Aitchison, *The Articulate Mammal*, 81–82.

³⁶ Adapted from Aristotle, Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* involves "dispositions to act and react in certain ways" (John B. Thompson, "Introduction," Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991], 1–31, 18–19).

important.”³⁷ The emphasis that both Bibbesworth and Bourdieu place on the social implications of language acquired at an early age again appear to be borne out by psycholinguistic research, which suggests that, while adults can become proficient in another language or dialect, certain linguistic patterns may not be learned after a relatively young age.³⁸

Dedicated to the Lady Mountchensy, Bibbesworth’s *trea tise* implies that according to his plan parents play a fundamental role in language acquisition. As Jean Aitchison observes, “language is natural behavior,” but “careful nurture is needed for it to reach its full potential.”³⁹ Language acquisition occurs as a developing system in adult-child interactions. The natural mechanisms “require external stimulation in order to work properly.”⁴⁰ Thus, although they do not acquire language through direct instruction or correction, according to psycholinguists, beginning in infancy children construct their understanding of language on the basis of interaction. In addition, it is from the parent or caregiver, adult models of linguistic behavior, that the child acquires specific sociolinguistic features of language.

Implicit in the *Treatise* is the interactive nature of language acquisition, with a key role assigned to Madame: “Speak to your children in French” (“E[n] fraunceis lui devez dire”), describing the parts of the body. Perceptively, Bibbesworth establishes an interactive frame with the pronouns *je / tu* or *vous*, putting into play the communicative bond that facilitates language acquisition:

Jeo ai les cheveuz recercillez	<i>lockes criske</i> ⁴¹
Moun toup, vous prie, estauchez	<i>hevese</i>
En vostre chief vous avez toup (ll. 33–35)	<i>foretop</i>
[On my head I’ve a curly mop;	
Cut it very short I pray.	
You’ve got a forelock on top]	

So too in presenting terms for clothing, the treatise utilizes interactive verb forms in the form of a second person plural imperative, softened by the terms of endearment and implying that the child or children have learned to dress independently: “Vestez vous dras, beaus duz enfauns” (l. 183; Put on your clothes, pretty, sweet children). Similarly, the inclusionary first first-person-plural

³⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 51.

³⁸ See, for example, Penelope Eckert, “Age as a Sociolinguistic Variable,” *Handbook of Sociolinguistics*, ed. Florian Coulmas (Oxford and New York: Blackwell, 1997), 151–67; here 160.

³⁹ Aitchison, *The Articulate Mammal*, 89.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ The italicized words are Middle English glosses from Cambridge MS Gg. 1.1, which are also printed in Rothwell’s edition.

imperative serves to engage the child: “Ore aloms as près e as champs” (l. 326; Now, let’s go to the meadows and fields). It also functions as an invitation:

Le jour devient trop beaus e cler;
 Alom dedure ou banoer pleyen
 Au verget ou sun les flurs
 Dunt en issent les dux odurs,
 Herbes ausi our medicine (l. 638–42);

[The day’s so beautiful and fair
 Let’s go to the garden; there
 are flowers with such sweet odors.
 There also are herbs for cures].

In addition to terms of endearment (e.g., “beauz duz enfaunz” [l. 215]), which may be formulaic but can also reflect real sentiment, the *Treatise* evidences a tone that is nurturing, accommodating to the child’s needs, abilities, and interests. In language as with other activities like eating and dressing, there is no suggestion of force or punishment. The importance of adult-child interactivity, particularly in relationship to a mother or caregiver with whom the child feels a bond, has been described and emphasized many times in studies of language acquisition.⁴²

Alert to children’s perceptions, intellectual abilities, and experiences, Bibbesworth is attuned to the mentality and culture of childhood. He deploys language so as to engage, amuse, delight, and instruct, and in so doing he provides a glimpse of aristocratic childhood in thirteenth-century England.

Early in the *Treatise*, Bibbesworth provides his audience with an array of animal sounds, many onomatopoeic sounds that children have perennially loved to imitate:

Ore oiez naturement	
Des bestes le diversement	
Checun de eus e checune,	
Solum ki sa nature doune.	
Home parle, ourse braie	berre
.....	
Vache mugist, gruue groule	cow lowes crane crekez
....	
Chivaule henist, alouwe chaunte	neyez larke
Columbe gerist e coke chaunte	croukes
Chate mimoune, serpent cifle	mewith cisses

⁴² Colwyn Trevarthen, “Descriptive Analyses of Infant Communicative Behaviour,” *Studies in Mother-Infant Interaction*, ed. H. R. Schaffer (London: Academic Press, 1977), 227–70; and Colwyn Trevarthen, “Communication and Cooperation in Early Infancy: A Description of Primary Intersubjectivity,” *Before Speech*, ed. M. Bullowa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 321–47.

Asne rezane, cine recifle roreth
 Louwe oule, chein baie . . .
 (ll. 244–56)

suan cisses
wolfe yollez berkes

[Listen and hear in language pure
 How in accordance with nature
 The animals, which here abound,
 One by one makes its own sound:
 Man talks; bear growls;
 Cow moos and crane squawks

 Horse neighs, lark warbles
 Dove coos and cock crows
 Cat meows and serpent hisses.
 Donkey brays and swan too hisses.
 Wolf howls and dog bays . . .].⁴³

Like naming the parts of the body, this strategy capitalizes upon concrete nouns and simple actions, here animal names and simple verbs. It also incorporates phonemic experimentation through repetition, and even the process of communication. In the multiglossic, bi- or tri-lingual, and pluri-dialectal context of thirteenth-century England, the polyphony, if not the cacaphony, of voices no doubt quickened Bibbesworth's sense of communicative variety and language play.

The treatise also exploits the prosodic features of language like rhyme and alliteration, which share many characteristics with song. As noted by Albrecht Classen in the introduction to this volume, Bartholomaeus Anglicus had observed that "children are witty to lerne carols."⁴⁴ The profundity of this observation has recently been demonstrated, for even infants respond to the prosodic features of language, and children as young as two or three can detect rhymes and alliteration.⁴⁵ Additionally, sensitivity to rhyme is also related to morphological awareness in children.⁴⁶ It is not surprising then that Bibbesworth's versified treatise can easily be divided into rhymed segments that could be sung or chanted

⁴³ T. Wright, an early editor of Bibbesworth's work, points out the similarity between this passage and a fifteenth-century poem ("The *Treatise* of Walter Bibbesworth," *A Volume of Vocabularies* [London: Privately Printed, 1857–1873], 142–74; here 151, note 6). A modernized version of the poem is printed in Orme's *Medieval Children*, where it is described as "a school book rhyme" (152–53).

⁴⁴ Classen, "Phillipe Aries," 23–24.

⁴⁵ For an interesting study of the role of prosodic features in language acquisition, see Peter Jusczyk, *The Discovery of Spoken Language* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997). See also Gary A. Troia, "Phonological Processing and Its Influence on Literacy Learning," *Handbook of Language and Literacy*, 271–301, and 274.

⁴⁶ Joanne F. Carlisle, "Morphological Processes That Influence Learning To Read," *Handbook of Language and Literacy*, 318–39.

like nursery rhymes,⁴⁷ as in the following example, which contrasts *rubie* ["ruby"] and *rupie* ["drop at the end of the nose"]:

Meuz vaut la rubie par .b.
 Ki ne fet le rupie par .p.,
 Car ci bource eut tant des rubies
 Cum le nes ad des rupies,
 Mult serreit riches de pirie
 Qui taunt eut de la rubie. (ll. 47–52) *precieuse stones*

[Great worth have rubies with a 'b',
 Surpassing 'rupies' with a 'p'.
 If this purse had rubies, let's suppose,
 As drops that fall from a runny nose,
 With precious jewels rich would be he
 Who possessed so many a ruby.]

Bibbesworth also inserts vivid images into his text, as in his fanciful contrast of the unity and polysemy of the English *red*, as opposed to the "diversité" of the French equivalents. He invites his readers to imagine a red-haired (*rous*) knight on a red (*sor*) horse with a red (*gules*) shield and holding a red (*rouge*) lance in one hand and a glass of red (*vermayl*) wine in the other, an unforgettable scene. Such visual images, as Mary Carruthers has demonstrated in another context,⁴⁸ serve as mnemonic devices to facilitate later recall. Similarly, Bibbesworth also offers memorable personifications of a wheel hub ("moail") and an egg yolk ("mouwel"), who converse with each other:

Dit le moail de la reof *nathes wel*
 Tut dreit au mouwel de l'oef *yolke hei*
 "Je su fort a fes porter."
 E jeo', fest li autre, 'bon a manger.'" (ll. 845–48)

[The hub of the wheel
 said straight out to the yolk of the egg:

"I am strong for carrying loads."
 "And I," said the other, "am good to eat."]⁴⁹

So, too, in a four-line vignette that brings together a king and queen and a frog and a net, Bibbesworth creates a miniature tale that would appeal to a child's imagination, facilitating later recall:

⁴⁷ See, for example, Orme, *Medieval Children*, 92.

⁴⁸ *The Book of Memory. A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 28, 128–29, and 137.

⁴⁹ Rothwell's translation in "Of Kings and Queens and Nets and Frogs: Anglo-French Homonymics," *French Studies* 48 (1994): 257–73, 272.

Je vie une reyne sanz rey *quene*
 Pur une reyne fere desray *frock*
 Ki enmye le reume le rey
 En un reoun sist en un rey *forwe nette*
 (ll. 319–22)

[I saw a queen [*reyne*] without a king [*rey*]
 become agitated /distressed on account of a frog [*reyne*]
 that was sitting in a net [*rey*] in a furrow [*reoun*]
 in the middle of the king's [*rey*] realm [*reume*].⁵⁰

Bibbesworth also includes a riddle of the kind that appeals to the young: "Un devinail voil demustere" (l. 591), the curious power of winter weather to transform the garden or orchard:

En yver quant l'orere chaunge
 Une verge i cress estrange,
 Verge qui est saunz verdour . . . (ll. 592–94)
 [In winter with the weather's change,
 The orchard then becomes so strange:
 Although it grows, it is not green . . .].⁵¹

Bibbesworth's plays on words, which are a frequent source of humor, incorporate a whimsical quality to which children would respond with glee:

Jeo oy toner, veir il toune, *thonner thondres*
 Dunt la cervice empire en toune. *toune*
 Ore me suffrez, mon pee toune. *slepeth*
 Nul de vous mot ne sounel! (ll. 586–89)
 [I hear thunder; there's real thunder;
 Beer in tuns goes bad — no wonder.
 Forgive me, please, my foot's asleep;
 Don't any of you make a peep].⁵²

With skill, Bibbesworth orchestrates homonymy, homophony, homography, paronomasia, polysemy, antanacsis, and adnominatio⁵³ not only for their obvious

⁵⁰ Rothwell's translation ("Of Kings," 257). I have added the French terms in square brackets.

⁵¹ Wright points out that the answer to the riddle is "an icicle" ("The *Treatise* of Walter Bibbesworth," 161).

⁵² For a more literal translation, see Rothwell, "Of Kings," 271. His insights open up the humor of the lines: "I can hear it thunder; indeed it is thundering, On account of which the beer goes off [goes bad] in the vat. Excuse me, my foot has gone to sleep" (ll. 586–88). In connection with line 587, Rothwell also notes the integration of the Middle English *toune* ("vat" or "tun") into the Anglo-French (259).

⁵³ John Lyons defines absolute or complete *homonymy* "as a relation between lexemes" that have "the same orthographic and phonetic form but unrelated meaning and are usually heterologous (e.g., *bank* 'side of a river' and *bank* 'financial institution')." *Homophony* and *homography* are "two kinds of

entertainment value, but for their pedagogic worth as well. Homonyms and near homonyms constitute powerful mechanisms bound to language's underlying system including its grammatical and syntactic structure. Despite a long-term bias against homonymic, homophonic, homographic, and polysemic terms as purveyors of ambiguity and impediments to communication, effective exploitation of their linguistic potential can be considered from another perspective. The encoding and decoding of language implicit in word play requires a firm grasp of the systematic quality of language: "When we think about language as intentional—as a system held together by its own inner tension or network of relationships—we can easily see that some understanding of the entire system must precede the decoding of any individual unit within it."⁵⁴ Word play then is "first of all a reference to the systematic operation of language, which relies for the production of meaning upon an already understood system of rules, as well as upon a (usually) disambiguating context."⁵⁵ Thus in addition to promoting phonemic and morphemic awareness, the *Treatise* also fosters growing knowledge of the semantic, syntactic, and systematic dimensions of Anglo-French.

Considered in the context of amusement for a reading or listening audience, the form and tone of the *Treatise* take on a certain clever appropriateness. So it is that Bibbesworth clusters the Anglo-Norman words for *lip*, *hare*, *pound*, and *book*, which are distinguished only by grammatical gender or by a single letter, in parallel sentences:

Vous avez la levere e le levere	<i>lippe the hare</i>
La livre e le livre	<i>the pound book</i>

partial homonymy" (e.g., *sow* and *sew* or *lead* and *lead*). Polysemy (i.e., multiple meanings for the same word), is "the result of metaphoric creativity and is essential to the functioning of languages as flexible and efficient semiotic systems (*Semantics*, 2 vols. [Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 1977], vol. 1, 559–61; 567). For paronomasia (e.g. a "play on words which sound alike" or are similar), antanaclasis, adnomination, and related rhetorical figures, see Richard Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991). For wordplay and puns, see Walter Redfern, *Puns* (Oxford and London: Blackwell, 1984). For a penetrating lexicographic discussion of homonyms and near homonyms in the *Tretiz*, see Rothwell, "Of Kings," 257–73.

⁵⁴ Kathleen Davis, "Signature in Translation," *Traductio. Essays on Punning and Translation*, ed. Dirk Delabastita (Manchester: St. Jerome and Naumur: Presses Universitaires de Naumur, 1997), 23–43, and 25.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 24–25. While young children may have some difficulty in mastering homonymy, which is inconsistent with "one-to-one mapping," the ability to comprehend homonyms appears to develop along with metalinguistic awareness, perhaps as early as two to four years. See for example, A. G. Bakscheider and S. A. Gelman, "Children's Understanding of Homonyms," *Journal of Child Language* 22 (1995): 107–27; and Martin J. Doherty, "Children's Difficulty in Learning Homonyms," *Journal of Child Language* 31 (2004): 203–14. On the complexities of disambiguation as identified in computational linguistics, see for example, N. Asher and A. Lascarides, "Lexical Disambiguation in a Discourse Context," *Journal of Semantics* 12 (1995): 69–108; and S. McRoy, "Using Multiple Knowledge Sources for Word Sense Discrimination," *Computational Linguistics* 18,1 (1992): 1–30.

La levere, c'est ke enclost les dens,
 Le levere ki boys se tent dedeins;
 La livere sert de marchaundie
 Le livere nous aprent clergie. (ll. 61–66)

[You have the lip and the hare,
 The pound and the book:
 The lip covers teeth to the tops;
 The hare hides in the woods and copse;
 The pound is the way to earning;
 The book is the way to learning.]

Such distinctions depend upon grammatical knowledge as well as meaning-based contextual cues, and with a little practice they can be easily and memorably distinguished. Moreover, the ways in which Bibbesworth deploys homonyms and word play are far from gratuitous. In every set of words, at least one of the pair is relevant to the practical vocabulary that the lord or lady would need in running an estate or to the lexicon connected with his or her social position, and the vivid depictions and associations serve as *aides-memoire*. It is not surprising then that Bibbesworth strategically sets forth his terms in clearly differentiated grammatical contexts, with memorable associations. Thus in pointing out the difference between the terms *jaroile* ("quacks") and *garoile* ("war engine," or "trap") (ll. 263–70), he graphically contrasts terms in the contexts of hunting and defending a town under siege—both activities significant to the nobleman.

As noted earlier the idea of linguistic propriety to be mastered at an early age is a recurring theme in the *Treatise*:

Beaus duz enfanç, pur ben aprendre	
En fraunceis devez entendre	
Ki de chescune manere assemble	
Des bestes ki Deus ad forme	
E des oyseaus ensement	
Coveint parler proprement.	
Une herde est apele	
Primes ou cerfs sunt assemble	<i>hertes</i>
E des gruwes ausi une herde	<i>cranes</i>
E des grives sauns .h. eerde;	
Nye de feisauntz, cove de partriz	<i>partriz</i>
Dameie des alouues, trippe de berbiz	<i>larkes</i>
.....	
Bovee des herouns, pipee des oyseauz	<i>smale briddes</i>

(ll. 215–30)

[Lovely, sweet children,
 For proper speech you need to know

How groups of beasts are labeled, so—
 Harts join together in a herd;
 Cranes also gather in a herd,
 And thrushes cluster in a flock.
 While pheasants form a brood, we say
 That partridge in a covey stay.
 A flight of larks, a troupe of sheep,
 Of herons a bevy; of small birds a peep.]

In addition to providing the appropriate collective nouns, many of which are hunting terms and therefore markers of social status,⁵⁶ Bibbesworth also includes other specialized and technical terms. For instance, he emphasizes the subtle differences that separate the terms for the spokes (*rais*) of a cart wheel, sun beam (*rais*), fish called (*raies*), and striped cloth(s) referred to as *rais*. (ll. 839–45).⁵⁷ Each of these terms has highly visual associations, replete with mnemonic value. Significantly, after clarifying these various distinctions, Bibbesworth returns to the spokes of a cart wheel, which lead him to describe the cart and its many uses. This repetition suggests the importance of knowing the parts of the implements—the cart and, later, the plow—on which so much depends (for instance, transporting seed, grain, hay, and straw), a point also illustrated in Walter of Henley's *Housbanderie*.⁵⁸ Moreover, given the responsibilities of landholding, a young person would also need to know the accurate, technical terms for the several kinds of grain (*blé*) (ll. 335–54), the flowers or plants of garden and orchard along with their medicinal properties (ll. 638–74), and methods of cultivating, planting and harvesting. In this regard, Bibbesworth's sense of lexical acquisition development during childhood is corroborated by present-day research: "building a semantic lexicon is a gradual process that begins in infancy and extends through adolescence."⁵⁹

The need for accurate technical terms related to lands, crops, and livestock, for example, would be essential in conversational exchanges. However, there is another engine that also drives precision in language—the written word. In a

⁵⁶ "It was an important part of etiquette and good breeding, in feudal times, to know and apply properly the special term for a company of different animals," as "a part of the science of hunting" (Wright, "The Treatise of Walter Bibbesworth," 150).

⁵⁷ See Rothwell, "Of Kings," 259–60.

⁵⁸ Not only does Bibbesworth's *Tretiz* present many terms contained works like the *Housbanderie* and the *Rules of Robert of Grosseteste*, but it is also bound with Walter of Henley's text in Bodleian MS Selden Supra 74. See, for example, Ruth J. Dean with collaboration of Maureen B. M. Boulton, *Anglo-Norman Literature. A Guide to Texts and Manuscripts* (London: Published for the Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1999), 216–17.

⁵⁹ Karla K. McGregor, "Developmental Dependencies between Lexical Semantics and Reading," *Handbook of Language and Literacy*, 302–17; here 302–03; and W. E. Nagy and P. A. Herman, "Breadth and Depth of Vocabulary Knowledge: Implications for Acquisition and Instruction," *The Nature of Vocabulary Acquisition*, eds. M. G. McKeown and M. E. Curtis (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1987), 19–35.

passage that has long gone unnoticed, Robert Grosseteste, in his *Rules* (composed in England about 1240 and dedicated to the Countess of Lincoln), offers the following advice on maintaining and utilizing written inventories and records, advice that has great relevance in connection with Bibbesworth's *Treatise*:

quauntes carues vus avez en chescun liu petit u graunt e quauntes vus porriez aver, quaunz acres de terre guaynable, quaunz de pre cumben de pasture a berbiz, cumben a vaches, e issi de tute manere des avers par certeyn nombre, e cumben de mobile vus avez ore en chescun liu de vif aver. E retenez co roulle od vus e sovent regardez le primer roulle e cetuy ausi ke prestement sachez trover co dunt averez a fere.⁶⁰

(how many ploughs you have in each place [manor], small or large and how many you can have; how many acres of arable land, how many of meadow, how much pasture for sheep, and how much for cows, and so for all kind of beasts and in definite numbers; and how much you have in moveables at the time in each place in form of livestock. And keep this roll by you and often study the first roll and this also so that you can find out quickly what you ought to do . . .)⁶¹

Grosseteste's injunction to "keep [the rolls] . . . by you" and "often study" them highlights the need for literacy in Anglo-French.

Thus, the special linguistic knowledge that Bibbesworth deemed necessary for young aristocrats on their way to becoming landholders would likely include at least a reading knowledge of French. As M. T. Clanchy has amply demonstrated in *From Memory to Written Record*, thirteenth-century England experienced a proliferation of documents related to estate administration and law and government, increasing the need for clerks who could read and write. With the rapid propagation of documents, not only clerks, but also lay men and women came increasingly in contact with written texts, especially practical documents touching on estate affairs (e.g. inventories, the acquisition of land, leases, wills). Such exposure to the written word stimulated interest in being able to read, at least in the vernacular. Moreover, as Tony Hunt argues, this growing need prompted women to learn to read, and perhaps to write in French, and to see that these skills were passed along "to the young of the household, who could be encouraged to play a part in the administration of domestic affairs."⁶²

It is here that Bibbesworth's *Treatise* can be seen to take on a central role, as a vehicle for transmitting vernacular literacy to children. Maintaining that Madame de Mountchensy was able to read French and English, Clanchy offers an important set of insights. First, Lady Dyonisia's children may have looked on as she read aloud to them.⁶³ Second, Clanchy notes that she and her children would have been familiar with the Latin primer, "*Le livre nous aprent clergie*" (l. 66 the

⁶⁰ "Rules of Robert of Grosseteste," Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley*, 387–416, 388 and 389.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Hunt, *Teaching and Learning Latin*, Vol. 1, 11.

⁶³ Clanchy, *From Memory*, 225.

"book that teaches us *clergie* " [in the sense of "reading knowledge of Latin"]) because by the thirteenth century, noble boys and girls were taught at least some Latin for religious purposes.⁶⁴

While literacy practices⁶⁵ like language are culturally and socially constructed, a body of research, often across cultures, indicates that certain patterns emerge in the childhood acquisition of reading, and some of these patterns can illuminate a process that has been virtually invisible because it occurred privately within the medieval family. A central point here is that Bibbesworth's book, which focuses on language, is a site of interaction between parent and child. The *Treatise* contains a rich vein of information about childhood in connection with language acquisition and a pedagogy infused with nurturance and support.

Bibbesworth calls his treatise a "*lievere*" ("book") (l. 567), the same term that he uses to refer to the book that teaches "*clergie*" (l. 25). One of the keys to literacy acquisition is currently known as *book-sharing*, a practice that is repeatedly linked with children's success in learning to read.⁶⁶ In addition, then, to the traditional model of an adult teaching the child the alphabet (it is currently thought, for instance, that in the Middle Ages the parent or tutor taught the letters from a psalter or book of hours, or by means of one of the various and often ingenious methods of alphabet teaching illustrated by Daniele Alexandre-Bidon),⁶⁷ another model also exists. Present-day researchers describe instances of a parent's reading to a child.⁶⁸ The book is either a storybook or a book of rhymes; there are

⁶⁴ Ibid., 245. See also M. T. Clanchy, "Learning to Read and the Role of Mothers," *Studies in the History of Reading*, ed. Greg Brooks and A. K. Pugh (Reading: University of Reading School of Education, 1984), 33–39. A notable forerunner in research on women as book owners and readers was Susan Groag Bell, "Medieval Women Book Owners," *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, eds. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 149–87.

⁶⁵ On definitions of literacy, see Ian Frederick Moulton, "Introduction," *Reading and Literature in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Ian Frederick Moulton. *Arizona Studies in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, 8 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), ix–xviii; here xii. On literacy practices, see Brian V. Street, "Introduction," *Literacy and Development*, ed. Brian V. Street (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 1–17; here 10–11. There are of course considerable differences between reading and writing, and it is reading that is considered here.

⁶⁶ Anne van Kleeck, "Fostering Preliteracy Development via Storybook-Sharing," *Handbook of Language and Literacy*, 174–208.

⁶⁷ Daniele Alexandre-Bidon, "La lettre volée: apprendre à lire à l'enfant au moyen âge," *Annales ESC* 4 (juillet-août 1989): 953–92. On the traditional model of teaching Latin literacy, see for example, St. Jerome, *Select Letters of St. Jerome*, trans. F. A. Wright (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1933), 346–48; and 467–69; and John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon of John of Salisbury*, trans. Daniel D. McGarry (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1971), 65–66. For modern descriptions, see Suzanne Reynolds, *Medieval Reading: Grammar, Rhetoric and the Classical Text* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Pierre Riche, "Apprendre à lire et à écrire dans le Haut Moyen Âge," *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France* (1978–1979): 193–203; and Tony Hunt, *Teaching and Learning Latin*, 1991. In his *Teaching Reading*, Davies offers a very general overview from the early Middle Ages through 1612; see especially 58–112.

⁶⁸ See, for example, van Kleeck, "Fostering Preliteracy Development," 194; and Barbara Hanna Wasik

exchanges between parent and child along with repeated readings as a result of which the child may memorize certain passages. Gradually the child begins to read, at first perhaps pretending to read, then making the connection between sound and symbol, next sounding out the words, and finally reading with greater assurance and understanding. In this scenario the child has "cracked the code," mapping written symbols to sounds.⁶⁹ Once this connection is made, children can make rapid progress, especially in languages where spellings are transparent (i.e., with isomorphic symbol-to-sound correspondence), for instance, languages like Spanish and German. This was most probably the case with Anglo-French.

Indeed, while it is recognized that explicit instruction in "the components of the alphabet code" can aid children in learning to read more quickly, some studies indicate that children who come from homes where written language is present and literacy is the norm learn to read even if they fail to receive such alphabet instruction because "they induce the code" through their environment or "home literacy experience."⁷⁰ Catherine McBride-Chan, a researcher in cross-cultural literacy, argues that children who are exposed to literacy (e.g., seeing books, seeing and hearing people read, and being read to) at home, even when they are "short-changed" in formal instruction in alphabet and phonics, can nevertheless become readers by "crack[ing] the code on their own."⁷¹ In addition, the more transparent the spelling, the less important explicit alphabet or phonics instruction is.⁷² Yet another factor is the child's familiarity with the language. Across the world today, researchers are finding that children learn to read most readily a language they speak, that is, writing that captures familiar sounds, words, and word order. Cases of children learning to read in their vernacular, even a newly transcribed vernacular language or dialect, with comparative ease are well documented. In light of this research, it is interesting to contemplate the possibility that King Alfred of England became a reader of vernacular English in a similar manner. According to Susan Kelly's summary of Alfred's progress toward being able to read, the future king was *illiteratus* at the age of twelve; presumably he could not read Latin. However, Alfred often listened to vernacular poetry and memorized it. By the age of twenty-two, he had learned to read texts in the vernacular.⁷³

and Jennifer S. Hendrickson, "Family Literacy Practices," *Handbook of Language and Literacy*, 154–74; here 162–63.

⁶⁹ Gary A. Troia, "Phonological Processing and Its Influence on Literacy Learning," *Handbook of Language and Literacy*, 271–301; here 272.

⁷⁰ Catherine McBride-Chan, *Children's Literacy Development* (London: Arnold, 2004), 119–20.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ "Anglo-Saxon Lay Literacy and the Written Word," *The Uses of Literacy in Early Modern Europe* ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 36–62, and 59–62.

We can not know which model of reading the children addressed in Bibbesworth's *Treatise* experienced. However, although the *Treatise* makes no explicit reference to learning the alphabet, it does refer to letters and spelling. For instance, "Great worth have rubies with a 'b', Surpassing 'rupies' with a 'p'." These letters have particular relevance in relation to reading, for early readers must learn to perceive the orientation of letters on the page, particularly the letters *d*, *b*, *p*, and *q*. So too an *h* that is silent in the spoken language must still appear in the written form: The terms *ourail* or *hourail* ["forest's edge"]⁷⁴ and *orail* ["ear"] may have been pronounced identically in Anglo-French, but Bibbesworth points out that the first is written with an initial *h* (ll. 556–57). In addition, whatever the pronunciation of the words, the distinction between *herde* ("herd") and *eerde* ("flock") hinges on an initial *h*, on the one hand, and an extra vowel, on the other. The *Treatise* also alludes to spelling: for example, "Car espeau⁷⁵ naturement / Ki les lettres ensemble prent" (ll. 732–34) can be read as "For [he] spells rightly who takes the letters together." Moreover, just as the distinguishing between homonyms and homophones in oral language is important in understanding spoken language; so, too, accurate decoding of written forms—including homographs and near homographs—is crucial to interpreting written texts.⁷⁶

Additionally, Bibbesworth's book includes visual information that indicates he had his reader in mind. The English glosses, which are interlined in some manuscripts and placed in the margin in others, are explained in the Prologue: "tut dis trovez vous primes le fraunceis e puis le engleise amount (Prologue; everything [I] say you will find first the French and then above English)."⁷⁷ In several of the manuscripts like British Library Arundel 220, moreover, the glosses are written in red, and the text contains separate headings for each section and visual cues like colored initials and red or red and blue *pieds de mouche*, which provide reading signposts. These glosses have led most of Bibbesworth's commentators to conclude that the purpose of the *Treatise* was to teach French to

⁷⁴ On this translation, see Rothwell "A Misjudged Author," 291.

⁷⁵ The Middle English gloss is "spele." See also *espeleir*, -er, *espeudre*, with the sense of "to spell (out)" in the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, eds. T. B. W. Reid, Louise W. Stone, William Rothwell, et al., 7 fascicles (London: The Modern Humanities Research Association, 1977–1992), fasc. 2, 265–66. Rothwell is hesitant on this point, however, and has called for further study on this word and its near homonyms ("Of Kings," 722–34).

⁷⁶ Kenn Apel, Julie J. Masterson, and Nicole L. Niessen, "Spelling Assessment Frameworks," *Handbook of Language and Literacy*, 644–78; here 668. For anomalous words and homonyms in second language acquisition and reading, see Patricia L. Carrell, "Interactive Text Processing: Implications for ESL / Second Language Reading Classrooms," *Interactive Approaches to Second Language Reading*, eds. Patricia Carrell, Joanne Devine, and David Eskey (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 239–59; here 254.

⁷⁷ This is the case with Cambridge Library MS Gg.1.1, which Rothwell edited. In British Library MS Arundel 220, the glosses are written in red and they appear at the end of each line. Accordingly, the Arundel Prologue states, "le Engleys suaunt" (the English following) (fol. 299).

Anglophone speakers. Notably, however, Susan Reynolds offers another possibility: in medieval Latin texts, glosses can aid in disambiguating homonyms or near homonyms, especially in the case of bi- and tri-lingualism.⁷⁸ In thirteenth-century England, many speakers and writers would have been able to draw on both French and English to a greater or lesser degree.

Much of the emerging scholarship related to children's acquisition of literacy argues that it follows the same path as language acquisition. Learning to talk, learning to read, and learning to write depend upon the child's "constructing increasingly sophisticated rules."⁷⁹ For instance, since comprehension in reading "depends heavily on the ability to comprehend words in spoken language,"⁸⁰ and acquiring spoken language can be viewed as an integral part of a continuum in acquiring reading skills. Thus all the knowledge that a child brings together in acquiring language—phonemes, morphemes, syntax, and lexicon—are brought into play when he or she begins to acquire reading skills. Interaction with a caring adult is essential, and whether or not the alphabet is explicitly taught, rhymes, word play, vocabulary that is based on the child's experience and interests, and lexical items that can be visualized by the child are fundamental elements in children's learning to read.⁸¹ According to researchers, an important point of entry is "book sharing," an interactive reading of and conversation about the book. In this connection, Joyce Coleman's discussion of reading practices, especially reading aloud in the fourteenth-century is pertinent.⁸²

⁷⁸ Reynolds, *Medieval Reading*, 66. On the topic of vernacular glosses in thirteenth-century Latin texts, with the related concepts of bi- and tri-lingualism and the interpenetration of English and French during this period, see Tony Hunt's magisterial *Teaching and Learning Latin*, vol. 1, 1-30 et passim. On code-switching and code-mixing in connection with the Tretiz, see Kennedy, "Changes," 1-19.

⁷⁹ See, for instance, Weaver, *Reading Process and Practice*, 67-69; Elfrieda H. Herbert et al., "Text and English Language Learners: Scaffolding Entrée to Reading," *Multicultural and Multilingual Literacy*, ed. Fenice B. Boyd, Cynthia Brock, and Mary S. Rozendol (New York and London: Guilford Press, 2004), 32-53; and David E. Freeman and Yvonne S. Freeman, *Essential Linguistics* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2004), 25.

⁸⁰ McGregor, "Developmental Dependencies," 308.

⁸¹ Herbert et al., "Text and English Language Learners," 32-53.

⁸² *Public Reading and Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Note too the famous scene in *Yvain* depicting a girl who reads aloud as her parents watch and listen (Chretien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier au lion* [*Yvain*], vol. 4, *Les Romans de Chretien de Troyes édités d'après la copie de Guiot* [Bibl. nat. fr. 794], ed. Mario Roques, *Classiques français du moyen âge* [Paris: Honore Champion, 1960]:

un riche home qui se gisoit
 sor un drap de soie; et lisoit
 une pucele devant lui
 en un romans, ne sai de cui;
 et por le romans escoter
 s'i estoit venue acoter
 une dame; et c'estoit sa mere,
 et li sires estoit ses pere, . . . (ll. 5357- 64)

While conclusions in regard to literacy practices connected with the *Treatise* are necessarily speculative, Bibbesworth's is a rich text that could be enjoyed by child and parent alike, though at different levels. One key here is the dual audience inscribed⁸³ in Bibbesworth's "book": sometimes the narrator addresses the mother: "you must say the word in French along with the appropriate article" (ll. 23–26). The reason for the excursion to the woods is "Pur enformer vos enfanz" (l. 327; to inform your children). Sometimes, especially later in the text, the writer addresses the children only: "Put on your clothes, pretty, sweet children" (l. 183). Considering Bibbesworth's book as text shared by a family, or by parent and child, in the context of "aurality" and "dependence on a written text,"⁸⁴ helps to explain some of the unanswered questions surrounding the *Treatise*; it also helps to illuminate the ways in which the commonplace books or miscellanies functioned in family life. For example, in describing Balliol College Oxford MS 354, a commonplace book transcribed by Richard Hill in the sixteenth century, Orme observes that it contains "a variety of writings [e.g., records of his children's births, collected stories, songs and other material], some of which would be appropriate for adults, some for children, and some for both parents and children." Among the contents are rhymes "close to many nursery rhymes."⁸⁵

With its nurturing and engaging approach, Bibbesworth's *Treatise* offers a lexicon based on real-life experience (from baby's head and feet to knowing the appropriate terms for plants and animals in the fields and the woods), and by emphasizing lexical contrasts and contextual cues to aid in word recognition, the *Treatise* both expands and orders the vocabulary,⁸⁶ while simultaneously providing means of sharpening language skills. The twenty-three divisions of the *Treatise* are also worth noting, for they contain categories of lexical items that correspond, more or less, to a reader's increasing maturity (infancy, childhood, and adolescence). Significantly, the latter descriptions include terms that would appear in a landholder's records and legal documents, as well as in his conversations,

[a rich man, who was reclining on a silken cloth, and before him, a girl [of no more than sixteen] was reading a romance, about whom I know not. And in order to listen to the romance, a lady had come beside them. This was the girl's mother and the man was her father. . .].

⁸³ On inscribed audiences, see, for example, Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor, and Ruth Evans, eds. *The Idea of the Vernacular. An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280–1520* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 115–16.

⁸⁴ Coleman 27–28.

⁸⁵ *Medieval Children*, 139–41 and 277–78. See also Nicole Clifton's contribution in this volume.

⁸⁶ There are estimates today that school children between the ages of 10 and 18 learn on the average of 3,000 words a year. Moreover, not only does lexical knowledge enhance the ability to read, but reading also increases vocabulary and semantic knowledge. See for example, McGregor, "Developmental Dependencies," 303 and 308; and Nagy and Herman, "Breadth and Depth of Vocabulary Knowledge," 19–35.

terms appropriate to one who advances in age and enters into estate management and husbandry.

The final twenty lines of Bibbesworth's *Treatise* describe a bountiful feast, with course after course of splendid dishes (ll. 1113–35). Upon detailing the last of the sweetmeats and spices, the narrator announces, "Einsi vous finist ceste sarmoun, / Car du fraunceis i ad assez / E de meinte manere diversetez" (ll. 1136–38; Thus concludes this treatise for you, for concerning French and of all kinds of different things, it is enough). Like the feast with its courses of varied yet related dishes, Bibbesworth's treatise on French has been set forth in successive sections, beginning with simple fare—brief words like the "bread," "egg," and "apple" from the first pages—to a full range of language served up for a gentleman or gentlewoman. Implicit here is the trope of eating⁸⁷—consuming, ruminating upon, and digesting—in connection with taking in, reflecting upon, remembering, and incorporating the words of the written text. Bibbesworth understood well the principle of inculcating early on and establishing firmly appropriate language and discursive practices based on symbolic power. Significantly, the pedagogical strategies and practices deployed in the *Tretiz* anticipate modern-day theory and research connected with language acquisition and constitute an exemplary model, a factor that no doubt helps to explain the popularity of the work in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁸⁸

That Bibbesworth's *Tretiz* provides a skillful introduction to the French language is undeniable. His insights into childhood and language acquisition bespeak notable linguistic awareness and a keen sense of human psychology. Albrecht Classen's apt portrayal of Bartholomaeus Anglicus seems a fitting description of Bibbesworth: "he understood childhood, accepted children as what they are, and informed his adult readers about children's typical behavior, desires, and abilities."⁸⁹ Judging from the popularity of Bibbesworth's "book," his contemporaries and those who followed, would have recognized the truth of those words.

⁸⁷ On the classical origins of alimentary metaphors, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1963; orig. in German in 1948), 134–36. See also Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory. A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 164–69; and Wogan-Browne et al., *The Idea of the Vernacular*, 220.

⁸⁸ On the popularity of Bibbesworth's *Tretiz* and its subsequent adaptations, see Andres Max Kristol, "L'enseignement du français en Angleterre (XIIIe–XVe siècle): les sources manuscrites," *Romania* 111 (1990): 289–330; here 294.

⁸⁹ Classen, "Philippe Aries," 24.

Nicole Clifton

(Northern Illinois University)

The Seven Sages of Rome, Children's Literature, and the Auchinleck Manuscript

Prelude: the Pervasive Ariès

"Childhood, as we now think of that period between infancy and adulthood, is an invention of the eighteenth century in those very few countries of Western Europe that could afford leisure and were dedicated to creating and confirming a middle-class elite."¹ This statement accompanies an exhibit on illustrated children's books, "Picturing Childhood," at UCLA. It appears to make a number of assumptions: that the Middle Ages had no special term for the "period between infancy and adulthood" (not true); that childhood labor was widespread prior to the Industrial Revolution (medieval children did work that was suited to their immature bodies and minds, but were not expected to manage the crippling workloads of nineteenth century chimney sweeps); that special consideration allotted to childhood is a trait linked to the growth of the middle classes (apparently aristocratic children are as oppressed as lower-class ones). This strongly Marxist view of the past neglects the important point that the Middle Ages, because they were not industrialized, did not have the kind of underclass that marks the industrialized world. To be sure, the poor they had always with them; but then children and adults suffered alike, and were not so numerous, except in famine years, that there was no chance of alms. Before the Reformation, indeed, poverty was less likely to be seen as God's judgment, and the poor more likely to be viewed as opportunities to give alms and thus save one's soul.

Although Philippe Ariès's name does not appear on the exhibit website, his influence is obvious. His claim—as it has been understood by Anglophone readers—caught readers' imaginations precisely because it was both sweeping and shocking, stressing the alterity of the Middle Ages (despite his accompanying

¹ David Rodes and Gloria Werner, <http://www.library.ucla.edu/libraries/special/childhood/fore.htm> (last accessed on March 14, 2005).

caveat that certainly medieval people did feel affection for children).² Scholars, of course, challenged the claims of *Centuries of Childhood* from an early date. In 1967, Irene Quenzler Brown said, "if one seeks to reconstruct the status of the child at any given period on the basis of Ariès's assorted evidence, one meets vagueness and even inconsistency;"³ she also notes that his "insular approach has not acquainted him with the basic innovations in pedagogy and child psychology made . . . in the fifteenth century, innovations based precisely on the acceptance of the special nature of childhood" (362). Although journals of medieval studies, such as *Speculum*, failed to review a book that focused on the seventeenth and later centuries, by 1980 Adrian Wilson could produce a scathing overview of the first twenty years of Ariès reception, noting objections from such disparate sources as Natalie Zemon Davis, Lloyd deMause, and Lawrence Stone, who, though they all work on childhood and adolescence, take notably different approaches to the subject.⁴

In fact I generally agree with parts of the UCLA statement, if re-phrased something like this: "in the industrialized world, the middle and upper classes mark themselves off from the working and under classes by privileging the lives of their children and women, giving them special roles, clothing, space, and occupations (or non-occupations)." But this statement does not speak to the Middle Ages. What we must ask, instead, is "How did the Middle Ages define childhood and distinguish it from either infancy or adulthood? How did medieval people educate and entertain their children? How did the figure of the child function in literary contexts, and what does this imply about the conception of childhood? What special accommodations did literature and other areas make for children?"

The *Seven Sages* and the Auchinleck Manuscript

I contend that the well-known Auchinleck manuscript (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates MS. 19.2.1),⁵ long considered as an important

² Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Random House, 1962), 128.

³ Irene Quenzler Brown, Review of *Centuries of Childhood*, by Philippe Ariès, *History of Education Quarterly* 7 (1967): 357–68; here 358.

⁴ Adrian Wilson, "The Infancy of the History of Childhood: An Appraisal of Philippe Ariès," *History and Theory* 19, 2 (1980): 132–53; Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth-Century France," *Past and Present* 50 (1971): 41–75; Lloyd deMause, "The Evolution of Childhood," *History of Childhood Quarterly* 1 (1974): 503–606; Lawrence Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).

⁵ See also the on-line edition at <http://www.nls.uk/auchinleck/> (last accessed on March 14, 2005).

repository of medieval English romances and related materials such as saints' lives, testifies to a serious and sustained production and appreciation of medieval children's literature. I base this contention on the following considerations: the entire manuscript is in English, suggesting readers uncomfortable with French or Latin; many of the texts contain didactic elements of the sort to be found in courtesy books aimed at children and teenagers; in some cases, literary texts elaborate on material from purely didactic texts also in the Auchinleck manuscript, in a way calculated to excite interest and reinforce learning in young readers or hearers; many of the texts have children as protagonists or in important symbolic roles; the style and contents of many texts share characteristics of children's literature as it is presently defined; subject matter, particularly when compared to Old French sources, appears to have been adapted for unsophisticated readers. Scholars have long leveled this criticism at many medieval English romances (with exceptions such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*), but traditionally the audience for these romances has been understood to be lower-class or upwardly mobile adults. I argue that children are a more likely audience for these texts, and that in particular, *The Seven Sages of Rome* seems well-fitted to be family literature, addressing a wide range of interests and suggesting possibilities for interpreting other texts in the manuscript.

This frame story, imported from the East, was known throughout Europe. It involves a prince, educated by seven masters, whose stepmother falsely accuses him of rape. To save the boy, who has foreseen that he will be safe if he does not speak for a week, each sage in turn tells a story urging the emperor not to trust his wife, while the stepmother each night counters with a story against either the boy or the masters. Finally the prince speaks on his own behalf, and his father puts his wife to death and reconciles with his son.

The seven-days framework invites us to see the inner stories as paired texts, commenting on each other. Moreover, we should attend not only to the implications of these stories' relationships to one another, but also to consider the effects of such a reading on the interpretation of the manuscript as a literary whole. The *Seven Sages*, originally item 25 in the Auchinleck manuscript, is now item 18—a bit less than halfway through—following a long run of mainly religious works and preceding a number of romances and other secular texts. Its position, therefore, may encourage readers to reflect on both earlier and later items in the book. It evokes or foreshadows other texts in the Auchinleck manuscript, particularly *Floris and Blancheflor*, which immediately follows *Seven Sages* (a gathering is missing at the beginning of *Floris*, but it presumably begins similarly to the other ME MSS). The two stories share pleasant-sounding schooling and an exotic setting, as well as having protagonists with very similar names. Furthermore, both feature courts who have mercy on children despite the rulers' plans to kill the young people. The seductive stepmother of *Seven Sages* may be an *in malo* version of *Blancheflor*,

who is perfectly loyal and long-suffering. The introductory sections about masters and schooling seem to aim at parents or guardians who supervise education.

Seven Sages also refers to the romance *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, which appears later in the book. One of the internal stories, told by the empress, features Merlin, the child without a father, who cures an emperor of his blindness by advising that he kill his seven wise men. Merlin also appears as a main character in *Arthour and Merlin*, where his ambiguous parentage receives considerable attention. Another internal story in *Seven Sages* involves an adulterously begotten child, calling both Merlin and Arthur to mind. Many of the internal stories, in fact, involve children, usually sons or nephews. Of course the frame demands stories that alternately praise and revile the young, but the Auchinleck manuscript as a whole contains many stories where children play an important part. The *Life of Adam and Eve*, for example, devotes about a third of its length to their son, Seth.

The original owner of the manuscript, who may have commissioned it for a particular purpose, selected the texts it contains. Many of them, including the *Seven Sages*, translate popular French or Latin texts into English. I believe that many such translations were made not for upwardly mobile bourgeois audiences who did not know French—because many people in that class did know French⁶—but for children raised in English-speaking households who might learn French later, as an accomplishment. These might include girls who were educated at home, while their brothers learned Latin and French at school.

The Auchinleck manuscript is a fairly large volume, its 331 extant folios now measuring 250 x 190 mm (about 10 inches by 7 1/2; the pages have been trimmed); smaller than “coffee-table size,” it remains a hefty book. The manuscript has lost a number of folios, and unknown items with them: the present first text has the number 6 at its head. Seventeen or more texts may have been lost, yet at 43 items, the Auchinleck is a treasure trove of Middle English literature. Entirely on parchment, entirely in English, dating to the decade between 1330–1340, illustrated (much manuscript damage is due to illuminations having been cut out), this book appears to have been produced by a lay establishment, in London, for a wealthy patron. Timothy Shonk estimates its original cost at around ten pounds.⁷ To give an idea of contemporary buying power, during the fourteenth century the English crown encouraged any man with a landed income of over 40 pounds a year to become a knight, while by 1400 esquires were worth 20 to 40 pounds per year and

⁶ See, for example, Peter Coss, “Aspects of Cultural Diffusion in Medieval England: The Early Romances, Local Society, and Robin Hood,” *Past and Present* 108 (1985): 35–79, and Nigel Wilkins, “Music and Poetry at Court: England and France in the Late Middle Ages,” *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. V. J. Scattergood and J. W. Sherborne (London: St. Martin’s Press, 1983), 183–204.

⁷ Timothy A. Shonk, “A Study of the Auchinleck Manuscript: Bookmen and Bookmaking in the Early Fourteenth Century,” *Speculum* 60 (1985): 71–91; here 89.

gentlemen from 10 to 20 pounds.⁸ The book would have been a considerable investment, probably treasured within generations of a family. However, we know nothing of its original patron or scribes.

Some hundred years after the manuscript's creation, a fifteenth century reader recorded the names of a family on folio 107 of the manuscript. Following the Norman names of the Battle Abbey Roll, in a firm hand, the following names appear: Mr Thomas and Mrs Isabel Browne, Katherine, Eistre, Elizabeth, Walter, William, Thomas, and Agnes Browne. This list suggests that during the 15th century, the manuscript belonged to a family—a large family, with children of varying ages to be educated and entertained. Thus the manuscript's contents are, in late medieval England, demonstrably children's literature in the sense that they had an audience of young people. Unfortunately, the Brownes' name is so common as to hide them from historians' scrutiny, yet the list itself tells us something about them. The name Browne follows each of the children's names, so either all seven were unmarried when this inscription was made, or the writer thought of the family as a unit, even if the older girls had married. The number of children might suggest a gentry family, since city merchants often had smaller families, but this is uncertain. If all the children listed were living, the Brownes were fortunate, and perhaps the inscriber was celebrating this fortune; if some died young, it is significant that the writer of the names thought of them all as a family unit, whether alive or dead. The Brownes were sufficiently well off to own or have access to this book; if it did not pass from generation to generation of this family, perhaps it came to them by will, by gift, or as security for a loan. At least some of them were writers as well as readers: the hand that wrote the name is steady and practiced, if not a book hand. I propose to keep the ghostly Brownes in mind as I pursue my reading of the *Seven Sages of Rome*: what would the boys and girls and parents find to appreciate in this text?

But first, an excursus: what is children's literature?

Definitions of Children's Literature

Obviously there are problems in defining children's literature: it is not produced by children, or even chosen by children, but by adults. Adults are, therefore, always at some level in the audience for children's literature, whether as procurers (parents, librarians), as readers-aloud, or as fans (for example, adults who read Harry Potter novels for their own pleasure). This pleasure can be nostalgic or

⁸ W. M. Ormrod, *The Reign of Edward III: Crown and Political Society in England 1327–1377* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 148.

participate in the pleasure inspired by genres such as fantasy (arguably the modern version of romance), but it should not be dismissed. Adults who select children's literature for their own reading material may very well have other criteria in mind than those who pick out stories for children—even when these categories overlap. Nonetheless, most critics agree on a certain constellation of traits that characterize children's literature. As with a medical syndrome, any one or two of these traits do not define the genre, but a large selection of them indicate a high likelihood that a text was written for, or would likely be appreciated by, children.

First, in fiction, child or animal protagonists are the rule. Some fiction for adults does use children as protagonists; for example, Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding*. Moreover, mainstream novels often begin with the protagonist's childhood before considering her or his adult life. However, very few texts for children focus entirely on the activities of adults. Animals are a somewhat ambiguous category, but theorists of children's literature classify animals with children: in a world where adult humans are in control, children and animals (even talking ones) are equally at their mercy. Human characters who intrude into imaginary worlds inhabited by animals, such as the washerwoman in *The Wind in the Willows*, are usually servants or in some other way rendered inferior to the animals, just as servants would be the inferiors of upper-class children. Children demonstrably take greater interest in other children than they do in adults; similarly, they respond to the presence of children in literature—even in literature not originally intended for them.

Children's fiction also tends to emphasize action rather than reflection, a point so widely accepted that few critics dilate on it, preferring to move on to related notions like theme or structure. This emphasis on narrative perhaps explains why critics have tended to marginalize children's literature, along with other genres that stress plot over other literary considerations. I would like to note in passing that there is a high degree of permeability between fantasy and children's literature, which share an interest in both plot and magic. As for the sort of plot structure common in children's literature, it is frequently circular, following what Perry Nodelman describes as a "home/away/home" pattern, in which characters learn the value of home; Nodelman adds that if leaving home leads to maturation, then the story is for adults, while if "escape allows the preservation of some form of innocence," the story is most likely for adolescents.⁹

The word "simplicity" often appears in definitions of children's literature, in various contexts. The moral outlook of children's literature is simple, black and white, rather than delicately nuanced. The fictional world may be violent, as in

⁹ Perry Nodelman, *The Pleasures of Children's Literature* (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1996), 155.

traditional fairy tales, but whatever is wicked is clearly defined, and punished. Children's literature uses simple language, so that it will be easier to understand, and it makes points more explicitly, rather than proceeding by implication or indirection. Myles McDowell suggests that "conventions are much used" but Hunt shows how complicated these conventions can appear to readers unequipped with previous knowledge of them.¹⁰

It will now be apparent that many definitions of children's literature rely on nineteenth and twentieth century examples; in fact, children's literature scholars often accept Aries's thesis unquestioningly and assume the genre begins with the Puritans' tracts of the seventeenth century. These tracts, of course, do show the characteristics listed above: they tell stories about children, in simple language, in a very clear moral universe, and they focus on actions, the purported actions of real children, such as praying, rebuking friends for frivolous behavior, and going to church. These are not exciting actions, compared to twentieth-century books for children, but they are actions, stories—*exempla*—rather than sermons; we see children praying, rather than an author urging prayer upon his readers.

Moreover, those who consider the full range of children's literature, like Harvey Darton¹¹ (the *locus classicus*), agree that folktale, fairy tale, and medieval romance were read and loved by children. The crucial distinction, for these scholars, is that these tales did not aim solely at children, but could be enjoyed by a wide audience. Critics who dismiss the possibility of early children's literature may simply wish to address solely texts that demonstrably aim to entertain and instruct children alone, not adults as well. However, as noted above, those who write for children necessarily also write for adults, as adults buy (and read) almost all the children's literature sold. Therefore, any children's literature at some point considers its adult audience (even if it is the publisher rather than the author that pays most attention to this consideration). The chapbook might comprise an exception to this rule, in that it was cheap enough that children of the tween years might acquire their own chapbooks without reference to disapproving adults, but this point need not delay us here.

In fact, "family literature"—works appreciated by a broad age range—requires closer consideration to determine the characteristics that address adult and child constituencies, to enumerate the techniques used to keep the attention of all segments of its audience, and to evaluate the effectiveness of these techniques. In

¹⁰ Myles McDowell, "Fiction for Children and Adults: Some Essential Differences," *Writers, Critics and Children: Articles from Children's Literature in Education*, ed. Geoff Fox et al. (New York: Agathon, 1976), 141–42; Peter Hunt, *Criticism, Theory, and Children's Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), particularly chapter 5, "The Text and the Reader" (81–99).

¹¹ F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England: five centuries of social life*, 3rd ed. rev. Brian Alderson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

addition, we need to think about the implications of certain kinds of texts being family literature: what will different members of a family, at different ages, get out of medieval romances, fairy tales, legends, and so on? How do these texts interact with others, popular or learned, used in schools or in church, that readers might already know or be likely to read later? What does "family literature" teach, and how? Why and how is it entertaining? These questions have yet to be explored; this essay is a beginning on the problem, which I will deal with at greater length elsewhere.¹²

The difficulties of defining children's literature through its content have led certain critics — most notably Barbara Wall, Aidan Chambers and Peter Hunt — to focus on questions of audience and voicing. Children's literature, in contrast to works for adults, fills in more "gaps;" it draws conclusions that experienced readers could infer for themselves, provides more explicit comparisons, makes the attitudes of narrator and characters clearer. For example, Chambers studies passages from a Roald Dahl story re-written for children, comparing the earlier "adult" version. The children's version replaces irony with straightforward reporting, removes abstractions, and simplifies sentences; Chambers identifies the tone as "clear, uncluttered, unobtrusive, not very demanding linguistically."¹³ Even without multiple versions, we can see when writers fill in background that older or more experienced readers would already know, or would know how to fill in from context, as Chambers shows in his analysis of L. M. Boston's voice in the Green Knowe books.¹⁴ On the other hand, classic children's books such as those by Beatrice Potter have far more gaps than their modern retellings, as Peter Hunt demonstrates; modern versions explain motivation — "So Mrs Rabbit decided to give Peter something to make him feel better" — where Potter allowed audiences to deduce these elements: "Peter was not very well during the evening. His mother put him to bed, and made some camomile tea; and she gave a dose of it to Peter!"¹⁵

So considering audience, and gaps, does not always allow us to draw clear, simple distinctions between texts for adults and those for children. What of the stories that both children and adults read for pleasure? What makes them accessible and enjoyable for a broad audience? Barbara Wall studies the question in terms of narratorial voice, which she separates into the categories single, double, and dual.¹⁶ Single address, Wall says, is a 20th century development in which

¹² Book in progress; see also my "Of Arthur and of Merlin as Medieval Children's Literature," *Arthuriana* 13/2 (2003): 9–22.

¹³ Aidan Chambers, "The Reader in the Book," *Booktalk: Occasional Writing on Literature and Children* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 34–58; here 39.

¹⁴ Chambers, "The Reader," 49–58.

¹⁵ Quoted in Hunt, *Criticism, Theory, and Children's Literature*, 28.

¹⁶ Barbara Wall, *The Narrator's Voice: The Dilemma of Children's Fiction* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 35.

children are the only audience considered, and which treats them respectfully and seriously. This voice explains, but does not condescend. Double address shows awareness of adults in the audience of a work meant for children; this voice speaks over the head of children to these adults, inserting jokes or asides meant to entertain those who would be bored by the main story, while it shows self-consciousness in its attention to children. Although Victorian writers most notoriously use double address, it continues to appear in modern works, including film and cartoons. Wall finds that dual address is the most rare; this voice takes children and adults equally seriously, considering the needs of both kinds of readers, without talking down to anyone or creating an alliance between adult-narrator and adult-reader that ignores children, even temporarily.

In medieval literature for (or read by) children, we are most likely to find double address, allowing older and younger audiences to read a scene differently and appreciate different elements of it. Occasionally we find a writer referring to children directly—though not necessarily addressing them—as in the prologue of the romance *Of Arthour and of Merlin* (another Auchinleck text).

Childer þat ben to boke ysett
In age hem is miche þe bett
For zai mo witen and se
Miche of Godes priuete
Hem to kepe and to ware
Fram sinne and fram warldes care.¹⁷

The narrator implies that children who read *Arthour and Merlin* will be the better for it; he may reassure guardians or teachers, or he may include children in the audience to the prologue.

Similarly, the narrator of *Partonope of Blois* advocates reading for both old and young:

For be wrytinge we moste lere
How we moste gouerned be
To worshyppe Gode in trinite.
And ther-fore Stories for to rede
Wolle I conselle, withowten drede,
Bothe olde and yonge þat letteryd be.¹⁸

The narrator of *The Seven Sages of Rome* does not include such explicit addresses to children (in manuscripts where the beginning is extant: the Auchinleck text begins

¹⁷ *Of Arthour and Of Merlin*, ed. O. D. Macrae-Gibson. EETS, 268 (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), lines 9–14.

¹⁸ *The Middle English Versions of Partonope of Blois*, ed. A. Trampe Bödtker (London: Oxford University Press, 1912 for 1911), lines 15–22.

at line 120 of the standard edition). Nonetheless, I argue that this text does contain examples of dual address, one of which I shall examine below.

Seven Sages as Children's Literature

It might seem that a story whose protagonist is accused of rape must necessarily address adults, not children: the hero is sexually mature, if not full-grown—old enough to make the accusation plausible, at any rate—and few modern readers would consider the subject matter suitable for children. To answer the second objection first, such standards vary. The Middle Ages were not so mealy-mouthed with their children as the nineteenth and later centuries have been; consider the stories collected by the Knight of the Tower for his daughters.¹⁹ Many of these have explicit sexual content, and aim to teach young women not just the desirability but the necessity for chastity and a close guard on it. Moreover, Mary E. Shaner has shown that one version of *Sir Gowther*, whose hero truly is a rapist, was directed at an audience of children.²⁰ Sir Gowther's demonic heritage inspires him, as an infant, to bite off his mother's nipple, and as an adult to pillage and rape a convent of nuns. One extant manuscript leaves out this last detail; the other, included in an "anthology" manuscript containing three conduct manuals and three romances, develops it in gloating detail. Shaner argues that the romances of this manuscript are youthful readers' reward for getting through the conduct manuals, that the violence and uproar of *Sir Gowther* would appeal to an audience of boys.²¹ Sir Gowther, of course, repents and does penance, so that the tale ultimately celebrates his submission to God rather than his appalling youthful exploits. Along similar lines, I would argue that since Florentyn is actually innocent, we see him as someone who patiently suffers the ill brought on him by others, rather than as a negative example; and that the message is that innocence will triumph.

Although Florentyn's age during the main action of the tale may cast him as a young adult, the story and its characters present him always in a filial relationship, emphasizing his position as part of a younger generation, dependent upon the

¹⁹ *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, trans. William Caxton, ed. M. Y. Offord. EETS, ss 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

²⁰ Mary E. Shaner, "Instruction and Delight: Medieval Romances as Children's Literature," *Poetics Today* 13 (1992): 5–15; "Sir Gowther (Advocates MS. 19.3.1)" *Medieval Literature for Children*, ed. Daniel Kline (New York, 2003), 299–322.

²¹ For a critical discussion of the element of violence and alterity in this romance, see Michael Uebel, "The Foreigner Within: The Subject of Abjection in *Sir Gowther*" (96–117), and Jesus Montano, "Sir Gowther: Imagining Race in Late Medieval England" (118–32), *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen (New York and London: Routledge: 2002).

older. The inner stories, many of which involve conflicts between youth and age, reinforce this emphasis. The story opens with sending Florentyn to school, which invites us to see him as childish and in need of training. When he surpasses his masters by the age of 15, his precocity is meant to be astonishing, to make him stand out from other characters. His ability to outwit an adult plot against his life places him in the category of young heroes who are both unusual and capable of far more than adults expect of them—rather like Harry Potter. As with much “subversive” children’s fiction [see chapter one of Alison Lurie’s *Don’t Tell the Grown-Ups* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990)], this young hero is more than a match for his elders.

Returning to the problem of the accusation of rape, the jealous empress is provoked by a servant who suggests that the existence of a previous heir will make her children bastards:

Som squier or som seriant nice
 Had itold þemperice
 Al of þemperoures sone,
 Hou he wi₃ þe maistres wone.
 And hire schildre scolde be bastards
 And he schal haue al þe wardes
 Vnder hest and vnder hond
 Of þempire and al þe lond.

.....
 And þoughte, so stepmoder doz
 Into falsenesse [to] torne soz
 And brew swich a beuerage
 Þat scholde Florentin bicache

(Auch. 239–46; 249–52)

This description “fills gaps” in a way characteristic of children’s literature. The empress’s anxieties are spelled out, not implied. Moreover, not actions but explicit labels establish characterization: the servant is “nice,” while the empress, in the folkloric tradition of stepmothers, plans “falsenesse.” When she is alone with Florentyn, “ye emperice was queinte in dede / And [in] hire wrenche and in hire falshede” (425–6). The seduction attempt, in fact, seems designed to fail or at least to remain incomplete: she wants not to lie with Florentyn but to make him speak, or, failing that, to be able to accuse him of rape. In other words, the focus is not on sex but on duplicity.

The details of this scene emphasize humor rather than violence, in a way that may function differently for audiences of different ages. The empress relies on speech as well as gesture: alone with Florentyn, she sits by him, looks at him, and claims to have kept her virginity for him, since her husband is “of bodi cold” (436). At the end of this speech, she puts her arms around F’s neck. When she rends her

clothing, following his wordless rejection, she seems to have enough layers on that it should require considerable effort to get through them all, adding a comic element that shows her as laughable as well as false.

Sche tar hire her and ek here cloz,
 Here kirtel, here pilche of ermine,
 Here keuerchefs of silk, here smok o line,
Al togidere, wi₃ boze fest,
 Sche torent binezen here brest.

(458–62; italics mine)

As we have seen, some stories deliberately address both children and adults, sometimes speaking over the heads of children in their audience (double address, in Barbara Wall's terms), sometimes managing to treat the interests of both with equal respect (dual address). Here, I argue, we have an example of double address, where a younger reader would respond to the surface of the story — the danger to Florentyn, the suspense as to whether he will speak, the comedy of the empress's struggle to rip so much clothing all at once — while an older one would notice the absence of any language indicating desire or sensuality. The empress speaks to Florentyn almost as if to a child — "mi leue suete grom" (431) — and demands "kes me . . . and loue me" (443). We are a long way from the stress on pleasure in a similar scene in the Old French *Roman de Silence*.²² The fact of sexuality is not glossed over, but details are.

Finally, the Auchinleck text alone contains the lines of the emperor to the second master,

"Ich tok ze mi sone to lore
 For to teche him wisdom more
 And _{3e} han him bitreid;
 His speche is loren, ich am desmaid.
 Mi wif he wolde haue forht itake.
 To de₃" he seide "he schal ben don wi₃ wrake."

(973–8)

Brunner reads this as a direct accusation of the masters' having incited the rape,²³ the E manuscript (London, British Library, Egerton 1995 [later fifteenth century]) reinforces this view with the line "And lechery ye haue hym teche" (986). I wish to emphasize the father's desire to lay the greatest blame elsewhere than on his son. He seems to be trying to find a way around punishing his son, showing his concern and love for the boy.

²² *Silence: A Thirteenth-Century French Romance*, ed. and trans. Sarah Roche-Mahdi (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press, 1992).

²³ *The Seven Sages of Rome*, ed. Karl Brunner. EETS, 191 (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 215.

Both frame and inner stories emphasize action, often structured around the home/away/home that Nodelman observes is common in children's literature. (Not that no adult fiction uses that structure, but recall that definitions of children's literature look at a constellation of traits.) The frame story begins with Florentyn going away to school, and ends with his triumphal reintegration into the court, after a week's iteration of the leaving/returning pattern as his jailers bring him to court and take him away again.²⁴ Each day, the audience wonders whether he will keep his resolution to stay silent, whether his father will reprieve him again: though the action is predictable, it is also suspenseful. Florentyn's original departure for school is not escape, but an opportunity for maturation, which in Nodelman's terms suggests a story for adults. At the same time, however, restoration to home does preserve innocence, very literally: Florentyn proves innocent of the crime imputed to him by his stepmother, and returns to his position as his father's sole heir. Nodelman might argue that this suggests a story for adolescents, while a story for children would convey the message that home, "representative of adult values" is better, safer, than the outside world.²⁵ In fact, this story has the hero returning to cleanse home of evil influences—like various other romances in the Auchinleck manuscript—but I want to emphasize that Florentyn needs the help of his masters to win the day, that he cannot manage this feat on his own, and that far from overthrowing his father, he seeks only restoration to his former status as beloved and dutiful son. The frame structure, then, has something for everyone: this is family literature.

The framed stories similarly address a variety of interests in both structure and content. Stories told by the stepmother, of course, tend to present youths who contribute to the undoing of their elders, while stories told by the sages stress the perfidy of women. Yet other themes run through these tales, in some cases subverting, answering, or distracting from the overt message. The stories of faithful animals falsely accused by women and killed by their masters (*canis*, *avis*), for example, make a strong case for checking one's evidence and not relying on hearsay—never mind whose testimony is at fault—or simply for not acting in anger or grief, but restraining initial emotional impulses. Such points about self-control might well appear in didactic children's literature, while a child reader might be amused by the cleverness of the wife's tactics in the bird story, or respond emotionally to the faithful greyhound, just as later generations have to *Black Beauty*, another tragic animal tale.

The tales told by the stepmother have the obvious appeal of young main characters, who, moreover, always triumph over their aged uncles, fathers or other

²⁴ Auchinleck ends imperfect, at 2770; about 1200 lines are missing at the end, and it seems safe to assume that the storyline will not deviate significantly from other versions.

²⁵ Nodelman, *Pleasures*, 157.

authority figures. Thus young readers might understand these tales differently from how the empress means them, as warnings to her husband not to trust his son. Her first story, for example, about the “ympe” that ultimately kills its parent tree, might be read in various other ways: as advice on gardening (if you want to keep your big old trees alive, cut down shoots; alternatively, if you want to replace your old, unhealthy trees, prune them so as to allow their shoots light and air); as an exemplum about obedience not always being desirable (what if the gardener had persuaded the merchant to rescind his order to cut the branch shadowing the young shoot?); as a parable about the risks of getting what you think you want — it is, after all, the merchant who orders that his old pine be pruned, not the “ympe” that chokes it out without help. As Jaunzems observes, the “crime” of both the shoot and Florentyn is simply that they exist, and the stepmother sometimes deploys her tales illogically.²⁶ This element, too, could be used as a teaching device, offering readers who “unto logyk hadde . . . ygo”²⁷ a chance to test their skills on these vernacular texts.

The first master’s tale, which answers the stepmother’s story about the tree, has a much clearer moral (briefly discussed above). A knight’s dog saves his child from a snake; but the nurses and mother panic when they find blood on the dog’s snout and the cradle overturned, and tell the father that his favorite dog killed the infant. The knight kills the dog, only to discover the body of the snake by the cradle that still shelters the child, and bitterly regrets his hasty actions. The tale gives considerable detail about the knight’s domestic establishment; for instance, his child has three nurses, one to give suck and the other two to bathe the baby (713–7). In relating the struggle between the snake and the greyhound over the cradle, the narrator assures us that the “ye stapeles hit vp held al quert” (757), so that the cradle continues to protect the infant. These details suggest interest in nursery arrangements and a desire to alleviate anxiety about the child’s fate. The knight’s feelings, however, are strongest for his greyhound; in the end, he goes barefoot into a forest to become a hermit. The emphasis of this tale on such details, combined with the vigorous action of the fight between the two animals, strongly suggest an appeal to children and their interests.

By the fifteenth century, when the Brownes owned the manuscript, literacy was more widespread than in the early fourteenth century, and book production had increased. Older stories continued to be copied — and, eventually, printed — but Chaucer and other Ricardian authors had changed the face of literature. Readers

²⁶ John Jaunzems, “Structure and Meaning in the *Seven Sages of Rome*,” *Studies on the Seven Sages of Rome and Other Essays in Medieval Literature*, ed. H. Niedzielski, H. R. Runte, and W. L. Hendrickson (Honolulu: Educational Research Associates, 1978), 43–62; here 58.

²⁷ Geoffrey Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales* 1.286. *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

familiar with *The Canterbury Tales* will perceive a frame story like the *Seven Sages* differently from earlier readers. The internal stories of the *Seven Sages* come in pairs, share obvious themes and build to an expected conclusion. The stories of the *Canterbury Tales* do not all connect in obvious ways, but force a reader to think about thematic similarities. The *Seven Sages* might suggest other reading possibilities to sophisticated readers, such as considering that the texts that follow it might also be read in pairs, as stories that answer each other. Up to a point where at least five gatherings have been lost, seven neat pairs of texts follow the *Seven Sages* in the Auchinleck manuscript.

Following *Floris and Blancheflour*, a romance about educated children who reform and convert a capricious emir, comes "The Sayings of the Four Philosophers," a poem classified with prophecies or satires: four wise men gloss their gnomic utterances to explain why England is in bad shape and why love of God is paramount. It applies the lessons of *Floris* to a domestic setting. Next we have the Battle Abbey Roll, a list of names of Norman barons, followed by the first, couplet version of *Guy of Warwick*. This pairing inverts the previous one, in that it begins with an evocation of domestic aristocratic history, followed by a romanced version of English history, a foundation story for the earls of Warwick. The thematic connections between the next two texts, the second half of *Guy*, in stanzas, and the story of *Reinbroun*, his son, are obvious. *Sir Beves of Hampton* and *Of Arthour and of Merlin* are both, for medieval English readers, historical romances, both involving disinherited sons who must fight to regain their heritage as adults.

Of the next pair, "The Wench that Loved the King" is almost entirely destroyed; fragments of words remain that suggest England as a setting, and that money changed hands. "A Penniworth of Witt" tells of a merchant with both wife and lover, and how he learned to appreciate his wife's loyalty more than his lover's avarice and self-interest, through the advice of an old man met in a bar. It seems likely that "Penniworth" is a more moral answer to the fabliau that preceded it. The miracle story "How Our Lady's Psalter Was First Found" and *Lai le Freine* both involve abbeys, children given up or abandoned, and the making whole of what was damaged; one uses a purely religious context, one is a more secular story. Finally appear the pair of romances *Roland and Vernagu* and *Otuel a Knight*, both based on the Old French Charlemagne cycle of *chansons de geste*. Besides their common setting and characters, they follow the general pattern of one more pointedly moral or practical text alongside one more strongly fictional or entertaining²⁸: *Roland* teaches many basic tenets of the Christian faith to a Saracen knight, reinforcing the learning one might get in "The Paternoster Undo on

²⁸ See Shaner, both "Instruction and Delight" and "Sir Gowther."

Englissh" (the third work before *Seven Sages*), while *Otuel*, a longer tale, places a much greater emphasis on action.

Although I cannot develop here all the implications of these paired texts, both in their pairs and as a group, I believe that one way the Auchinleck manuscript served its family audience was by providing such pairs following the "key text" of the *Seven Sages of Rome*. Whether or not the original patron thought of using the *Seven Sages* in this way, an educated fifteenth-century audience would be very likely to see this possibility. These sets of texts allow more sophisticated readers to tease out the possible connections and probe for deeper insight into these works' lessons, while younger or less cultivated readers would focus more narrowly on the texts of particular interest or value for them: those introducing them to texts they might later read in French or Latin, those with young characters and plenty of action, and those that reinforce what they have learned in other contexts. Thus readers of different ages and backgrounds can all enjoy and profit from the same texts, from their different perspectives.²⁹

The Browne family had three sons to bring up to suitable careers, and four daughters to prepare for marriage. If I may, for a moment, imagine them all alive at the same time, ranging in age from adolescence down to a toddler, gathering in their home to hear a parent, tutor, or chaplain read to them from the *Seven Sages of Rome*, this is the picture I see: the oldest girls, Katherine and Eistre, whose marriages will soon be negotiated, focus on the relationship between the emperor and his wife. Their mother will ask them what lessons they learn from the wicked stepmother, from the wives of the various inner tales, and they will say they have learned not to leap to judgment or use their ingenuity to bad ends, but rather to ascertain the facts of a situation, to respect their husbands and be faithful, to use their influence over husbands and households wisely. The next child, Elizabeth, and the oldest boy, Walter, have not yet reached their teens. Elizabeth should be thinking about the same points as her older sisters, but she and Walter have learned the game of working out a tale's moral and compete to predict the point of the tales told by the empress and the sages; at first they are quite serious, but then they begin to invent silly morals and have to be rebuked. William has started school fairly recently; he wishes he had masters who knew such good stories, and he also wishes to own a good, loyal hound who would attack his enemies. Or he will be the hound, and attack Thomas, the serpent. Thomas is unprepared for this, since he was daydreaming about climbing the enormous pine tree of the empress's first story; both boys fall over Agnes before Katherine can snatch her out of harm's way. To the accompaniment of Agnes's wails, the three younger children are taken

²⁹ For a parallel study of a pedagogically oriented guidebook, or instructional manual, in thirteenth-century England (Walter of Bibbesworth's *Tretiz*), see Karen K. Jambeck's contribution to this volume.

away to bed, where they must say their prayers and Creed. Thomas insists on instructing a toy soldier in the Creed, making believe that this is Otuel, and he Roland.

However fanciful, this picture reminds us that "children" are not a unitary audience, but individuals with different abilities and interests. In the Middle Ages, a girl of fifteen is both old enough to be married and young enough to require further instruction, as the *Ménagier de Paris*'s treatise shows (in fact, he includes and adapts certain tales from the *Roman des Sept Sages*).³⁰ Her five-year-old brother may not care for, or even be able to understand, the tales she enjoys. I think that the *Seven Sages of Rome* would likely not be appreciated by young children, except perhaps as intermittent images or pieces of stories might catch their attention. Somewhat older children would be entertained by elements such as the elaborate efforts to convince the husband in *avis* that his bird had ceased to tell the truth (climbing on the roof, pouring water through a hole in it, making noise to simulate thunder), although they, too, might not comprehend the full implications of the tale. At a later stage of development, children will begin to put the pieces together, to appreciate both plot and morals, and even to analyze tales' morals and logic. The attention of an older person—parent or teacher—to this process will, of course, influence what younger readers are able to perceive, and at what ages they will do so. The framework of *The Seven Sages of Rome*, including a family and schooling, encourages such attention to the inner stories and their relationship to each other, and encourages learning to think about tales' morals (which often appear at the end of medieval texts, as do, for example, the allegories in the *Ovide Moralise*³¹); guardians alert to opportunities for moral education might encourage similar moralizing about the romances in the Auchinleck manuscript. *The Seven Sages* is placed in the manuscript in such a way as to invite both reflection on the holy legends that precede it, and anticipation of ways to interpret the romances that follow it; it is itself both didactic and pleasurable—the number of translations and analogs attest to its popularity around the medieval world; and in themes, narrative organization, and voice it seems well suited to family audiences including children and young adults, as well as those who care for them.

³⁰ *Le Mesnagier de Paris*, ed. Georgina E. Brereton and Janet M. Ferrier (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1994); Janet M. Ferrier, "Seulement Pour Vous Endoctriner: The Author's Use of Exempla in *Le Ménagier de Paris*," *Medium Aevum* 48 (1979): 77–89.

³¹ *Ovide Moralise*, ed. Cornelis de Boer et al., 5 vols. (Wiesbaden: Martin Sandig, 1966–68).

Juanita Feros Ruys

(Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Sydney)

Peter Abelard's *Carmen ad Astralabium* and Medieval Parent-Child Didactic Texts:

The Evidence for Parent-Child Relationships in the Middle Ages

In his Introduction to this volume, Albrecht Classen relates the story of Konrad von Würzburg's *Engelhard*, and asks whether the parental behaviors displayed in medieval narratives can be taken as indicative of real medieval parental attitudes. This is a key question, since a scarcity of other sources often requires medievalists to press fictional narratives into service in this way, as for example Doris Desclais Berkvam's study of childhood and maternity in the romances and epics of medieval France,¹ and Classen's own study of family life in medieval German literary sources indicate.² A modern reader of the actions that Engelhard undertakes and the arguments he espouses might find them so contradictory as to nullify their usefulness as evidence of true medieval attitudes towards children, but this is not necessarily the case. In fact, Engelhard's views match remarkably well with those stated by the twelfth-century French philosopher and theologian Peter Abelard, who was himself the father of a son named Astralabe. Like the fictional Engelhard, Abelard is capable of expressing great parental love, and his *Planctus Jacob super filios suos* (Lament of Jacob over his Sons) contains touching images of the elderly Jacob recalling with fondness the lisping first words of his son Benjamin: "informes in facie teneri sermones / omnem eloquentie favum transcendentos" ("as yet unformed upon your lips, the tender words surpassing

¹ I wish to thank the Australian Research Council for the provision of a post-doctoral Fellowship which has funded this research. *Enfance et maternité dans la littérature française des XII^e et XIII^e siècles*, Collection essais, 8 (Paris: Honore Champion, 1981).

² 'Family Life in the High and Late Middle Ages: The Testimony of German Literary Sources', in *Medieval Family Roles*, ed. Cathy Jorgensen Itnyre. Garland Medieval Casebooks, 15 (New York and London: Garland, 1996), 39–65.

every sweetness of eloquence").³ Yet on another occasion, also like Engelhard, Abelard can view children as necessary sacrifices to adult causes. Thus in his Letter 7 to Heloise on the history of nuns he extols the virtue and piety of the mother of the Maccabees who stood firm in her faith as her seven sons were killed before her eyes,⁴ and in his Hymns 99 and 109, written for the nuns of the Paraclete, he pictures children as an integral part of a family martyrdom, with mothers exhorting their children to self-sacrifice, in this way rebirthing for Heaven the children they bore once on earth.⁵ Unlike Engelhard, however, Abelard is under no illusions regarding the innocence of children and makes it clear in his *Ethics* that since even newborn children are tainted with original sin, a child who dies before baptism will suffer eternal damnation: "it is not absurd that some should undergo bodily punishments which they have not deserved, as is evident

³ Latin text of the *Planctus* cited from Wilhelm Meyer, *Gesammelte Abhandlungen zur mittellateinischen Rhythmik* (Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms, 1970; facsimile reprint of Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1905), 368, ll. 23–24 (hereafter Meyer); all English translations of the *Planctus* are from Ruys and John O. Ward, *The Repentant Abelard: Abelard's Thought as Revealed in his Carmen ad Astralabium and Planctus* (New York: Palgrave Press, forthcoming).

⁴ *La vie et les epistres Pierres Abaelart et Heloys sa fame: Traduction du XIII^e sie cle attribuee Jean de Meun.* Avec une nouvelle edition des textes latin d'apr s le ms. Troyes Bibl. mun. 802, ed. by Eric Hicks. Nouvelle Biblioth que du Moyen Age, 16 (Paris and Geneva: Champion-Slatkine, 1991), (hereafter Hicks), 131, ll. 836–43: "Quis incomparabilem matris .vii. filiorum constantiam non miretur, quos una cum matre apprehensos, sicut Machabeorum hystoria narrat, rex impiissimus Antiochus ad carnes porcinas contra Legem edendas nisus est frustra compellere? Que materne immemor nature et humane affectionis ignara, nec nisi Deum pre oculis habens, quot sacris exhortationibus suis ad coronam filios premisit tot ipsa martyriis triumphavit, proprio ad extremum martyrio consummata"; *Guidance for Women in Twelfth-Century Convents*, trans. by Vera Morton, with an interpretive essay by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 77–78: "Who does not marvel at the incomparable courage of the mother of seven sons, captured with their mother, as the history of the Maccabees tells, when the impious king Antiochus tried in vain to force them to eat the flesh of pigs against the law. And she, forgetful of her natural maternal love and untouched by human affections and having nothing before her eyes but the Lord, sent her children with so many exhortations to their crown and herself triumphed in so many martyrdoms, and finally ended in her own martyrdom."

⁵ See *Peter Abelard's Hymnarius Paraclitensis: An Annotated Edition with Introduction*, ed. by Joseph Szövényfi, 2 vols. Medieval Classics: Texts and Studies, 2 and 3 (Albany, NY and Brookline, MA: Classical Folia Editions, 1975), Hymn 99, 206–07: "Viri cum uxoribus, / Fratres cum sororibus, / Filii cum matribus / Belli stant congressibus. / Virum uxor animat, / Natos mater roborat / Et coelo regenerat, / Quos terra genuerat" ("Husbands with their wives, brothers with their sisters, sons with their mothers, stand prepared for war. The wife impels her husband, the mother strengthens her sons, and births again for Heaven those whom she bore on earth," my translation); and Hymn 109, 227 (on the martyr Eustachius): "Cum viro coniugem / simul ac liberos / Fides et passio / misit ad superos" ("The wife with her husband, and their children likewise, faith and suffering sent on to Heaven," my translation).

with little children who die without the grace of baptism and are condemned to bodily as well as to eternal death; and even many innocents are cast out."⁶ These views clearly vary with the genre and intended audience of the texts in which they appear, but that they can all have been expressed by a single medieval author, himself a father, indicates the vast range of thinking on children and parenthood that was possible in the Middle Ages. It suggests that no medieval representation of parenthood, fictional or not, should be dismissed out of hand as unlikely, simply because it is more complex or even more contradictory than modern scholars would wish.

In the context of this ambiguity and ambivalence regarding his attitudes toward children, Abelard's poem of advice to his own son, known as the *Carmen ad Astralabium*, assumes great significance. This is particularly the case since Shulamith Shahar, as Classen points out in his Introduction, has marked the existence of "educational theories and norms" as a key factor in the discussion of whether there existed a medieval concept of childhood. In fact, very little attention has been focused on the words of actual medieval parents to their own children. Classen argues that in the study of medieval childhood, "our selection of relevant documents need[s] to be refined and sensitized," and a perusal of parental didactic texts would appear a productive point of origin.

Medieval Parent-Child Didactic Texts

Abelard was not the first or only parent in the Middle Ages to feel the need to leave or present advice to his own child, nor was this form of care-giving the preserve only of fathers. The ninth-century Frankish gentlewoman Dhuoda anxiously wrote a handbook of advice for her young son William while he was absent from her, held as a political hostage. This work, which is discussed in more detail in Valerie L. Garver's chapter in this volume, opens with a verse inscription in which Dhuoda carefully spells out in acrostic the greeting: "Dhuoda dilecto filio uuilhelmo salutem lege" ("Dhuoda sends greetings to her beloved son William: Read").⁷ Louis IX, or Saint Louis, the King of France from 1226 to 1270, composed

⁶ "non absurdum est non nullos penas corporales sustinere quas non meruerunt, sicut et de paruulis constat sine baptismi gratia defunctis, qui tam corporali quam aeterna morte dampnantur, et multi etiam innocentes affliguntur," *Peter Abelard's Ethics*, ed. and trans. D. E. Luscombe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 62–63.

⁷ *Dhuoda, Handbook for her WarriorSon: Liber Manualis*, ed. and trans. Marcelle Thiebaut. Cambridge Medieval Classics, 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 42–46.

texts of advice for his eldest son Philippe and his daughter Isabelle. The *Enseignement* to his son begin: "A son chier filz ainzné Phelippe salut et amitié de pere" ("To his dear first-born son Philippe, the greetings and friendship of his father"), and the vocative "chier(s) filz" or "chier(s) fils" recurs eighteen times within a few short pages.⁸ Similarly, Louis's *Enseignement* to his daughter begin "A sa chiere et amee fille Ysabel" ("To his dear and beloved daughter Isabelle"), and almost every point thereafter is prefaced with the vocative "Chiere fille."⁹ At the end of the thirteenth century Christine de Pizan wrote a poem of advice for her son Jehan, the *Enseignemens Moraux*, which runs to one hundred and thirteen quatrains, and at the end of the fourteenth century, the Chevalier de la Tour Landry wrote a *Livre pour l'enseignement de ses filles* in one hundred and twenty-eight chapters designed to offer his daughters *exempla* of both good and bad women.¹⁰ In his Prologue to the book, which was also extremely popular in its English translation by William Caxton, the Chevalier makes clear his motivation in putting together this text (quoted here in Caxton's English): "And also for the grete loue that I haue to my doughters, whom I loue as a fader ought to loue them"¹¹ ("pour la grant amour que je ay à mes enfans, lesquelz je ayme comme père les doit aimer").¹² In addition, although not explicitly in the genre of the parental advice-text, there are extant three letters from the seventh-century gentlewoman Herchenefreda to her son Desiderius, the Bishop of Cahors, which convey the same sorts of advice, although necessarily more briefly, as the other didactic texts mentioned above and which are full of words of maternal concern and love.¹³ The salutation to each of the three letters is packed with endearments, such as "Dulcissimo atque amantissimo filio" ("Sweetest and most lovable son"),¹⁴ and the letters themselves repeatedly invoke

⁸ *The Teachings of Saint Louis: A Critical Text*, ed. David O'Connell. Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, 116 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 55–60.

⁹ *The Instructions of Saint Louis: A Critical Text*, ed. David O'Connell. North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, 216 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 78–81.

¹⁰ See *Le Livre du Chevalier de La Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles*, ed. Anatole de Montaiglon (Paris: Jannet, 1854); note, however, that much of the Chevalier's text appears to have been drawn from the earlier thirteenth-century *Miroir des bonnes femmes*, according to John L. Grigsby, "A New Source of the de Livre du Chevalier de La Tour Landry," *Romania* 84 (1963): 171–208.

¹¹ *The Book of the Knight of the Tower, Translated by William Caxton*, ed. M. Y. Offord. Early English Text Society, ss, 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 13.

¹² Montaiglon, *Le Livre du Chevalier*, 4.

¹³ See Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua (†203) to Marguerite Porete (†1310)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 29–30; and Karen Cherewatuk, "Speculum matris: Duoda's Manual," *Florilegium* 10 (1988–91): 49–64; here 51.

¹⁴ *Vita Sancti Desiderii, episcopi Cadurcensis*, Letter 9, ed. Br. Krusch. Corpus Christianorum: Series

Herchenefreda's "dulcissime fili," who is "mihi dulcissime" ("sweetest son," "sweetest to me").¹⁵

Albertano da Brescia, the thirteenth-century Italian jurist, wrote a text of advice for each of his three sons, Vincent (*De amore Dei*, in four books), Stephen (*De loquendo et tacendo*), and John (*Liber consolationis et consilii*). The prologue to the first book of the *De amore Dei* addressed to his eldest son Vincent contains a sentence of fatherly devotion that is so full of words of love it cannot be adequately translated into English, a language whose vocabulary is too limited to distinguish the nuances between the nouns "amor," "dilectio," and "caritas" and the verb "diligere," largely rendering them all with the word "love": "Quanto amore quantaque dilectione mea paterna caritas tuam diligit filialem subiectionem, vix tibi possem narrare, vel lingua mea posset aliquatenus explicari."¹⁶ When in the mid-fifteenth century Peter Idley closely adapted Albertano's treatises in forming Book I of his own *Instructions to His Son*, he adopted Albertano's introduction to the *De amore Dei*, including this sentence just quoted, verbatim, his only change being the substitution of his own and his son's names for Albertano's and his son's.¹⁷ What this suggests is that this early modern author saw no distinctions or contradictions between his own concept of fatherhood and the concept of fatherhood articulated by Albertano two centuries earlier in the High Middle Ages. Linda E. Mitchell has recently argued that human emotional responses have remained recognizably similar throughout history, although expressed in different ways according to the abiding cultural norms of the time;¹⁸ in this case, however, the contiguity of emotional response is emphasized by the fact that even the mode of expression has been adopted wholesale across an interval of centuries. This should in turn make modern scholars such as Ariès and his followers wary of perceiving and insisting upon differences between medieval and early modern understandings of parenthood.

This recital of interested and literate parents makes it clear that parents in the Middle Ages were concerned with their children's future, and a perusal of their texts indicates that this concern lay both with their children's success and safety in the temporal world and with their salvation in the world to come. These authors

Latina, 117 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1957), 353.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Letter 11, 355.

¹⁶ Ed. Sharon Lynne Hiltz (1980), www.thelatinlibrary.com/albertanus/albertanus1.shtml (last accessed on March 14, 2005).

¹⁷ See *Peter Idley's Instructions to his Son*, ed. Charlotte D'Evelyn (Boston: D.C. Heath and London: Oxford University Press, 1935), 81; for the dating of the text to 1445–1450, see 58.

¹⁸ *Portraits of Medieval Women: Family, Marriage, and Politics in England 1225–1350* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 5.

were motivated enough by parental concern to expend some effort on preparing and presenting advice, sometimes troubling to present it in Latin hexameters (Abelard), or rhymed verse (Christine), or with other mnemonic devices such as acrostics (Dhuoda). But for the sake of brevity and clarity, the Chevalier de La Tour Landry explains that he abandoned his original intention of a rhymed text: "And dyde doo make of them this book. whiche I wold not set it in ryme but al along in prose for to abredge and also for the better to be vnderstonden" ("je le fis prendre pour faire ce livre, que je ne veulx point mettre en rime, ainçois le veulz mettre en prose, pour l'abrégier et mieulx entendre").¹⁹ Despite his use of the traditional didactic hexameter verse form (as seen for example in the third- or fourth-century *Disticha Catonis*), Abelard makes a similar point in his *Carmen* about the importance of teaching being presented in its simplest and most comprehensible form when he argues that "Planiciem quemcumque sequi decet expositorem" ("It is fitting for any teacher to pursue plainness," l. 869) and that "ratio cuius preminet eloquio" ("reason surpasses any kind of eloquence," l. 824).²⁰

Some of these parental didactic texts run to significant length (Albertano's four books of the *De amore Dei*, Abelard's thousand lines of the *Carmen ad Astralabium*, Christine's four hundred and fifty lines, the Chevalier's hundred and more chapters) and must have consumed no small time on the part of their creators. And throughout these texts is both palpable and explicit the love—in an unambiguously "modern" sense—of these parents for their children. That such personal instruction could be read as an act of familial love is made explicit by Abelard in his dedication of Treatise II of his *Dialectica* where he confesses to his brother Dagobert that his weariness in composing the text is overcome "when the memory of your love and the desire for the instruction of my nephews rushes upon me," and he adds that his strength is now "enlivened by love, and it is as if love now lifts a set-aside work onto my shoulders again and what was fatigued by distaste is invigorated by desire."²¹

Perhaps even more significant than the existence of these parental didactic texts in indicating the relationship between parents and children in the Middle Ages is

¹⁹ Offord, *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, 13; Montaiglon, *Le Livre du Chevalier*, 4.

²⁰ All Latin citations from the *Carmen* are from Peter Abelard, *Carmen ad Astralabium: A Critical Edition*, ed. Josepha Marie Annaïs Rubingh-Bosscher (Groningen: [privately published], 1987); all English translations of the *Carmen* are from Ruys and Ward, *The Repentant Abelard*.

²¹ Petrus Abaelardus, *Dialectica: First Complete Edition of the Parisian Manuscript*, ed. L. M. de Rijk, 2nd rev. ed. (Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum: 1970), 146, ll. 24–29: "Sed cum lasso michi iam et scribendo fatigato tue memoria caritatis ac nepotum discipline desiderium occurrit...et animatur virtus ex amore que pigra fuerat ex labore, ac quasi iam reiectum onus in humeros rursus caritas tollit et corroboratur ex desiderio que languebat ex fastidio;" my translation.

the fact that so many more generic advice-texts were structured on the same model. There could hardly have been a justification for writing an advice-text to look like intimate advice from a parent to a child had there existed in this period the widespread lack of interest in or ignorance of parent-child relationships that Ariès posits. Yet instead such texts, purporting to be addressed from parent to child, proliferate.²² There are, for example, the Middle High German *Winsbecke* (father-son), *Winsbeckin* (mother-daughter), and *Magezoge* (father-son), the Italian *Dodici avvertimenti* (mother-daughter), the English *How the Good Wife Taught her Daughter*, *The Good Wyfe Wold A Pylgremage* (mother-daughter), and *How the Wyse Man Taught his Son*, and the fatherly voices in Petrus Alfonsi's Latin *Disciplina Clericalis*. This latter text was translated into French verse as *Le chastoiment d'un père à son fils*, in which, as with the English didactic texts just mentioned, the parental didactic relationship is both highlighted and made explicit in the title.

Scholars have argued that some of these texts reveal signs of an authorship other than that claimed within the text and title. Tauno F. Mustanoja has suggested that the author of *How the Good Wife Taught her Daughter* was "probably a man, and most probably a cleric,"²³ and Felicity Riddy similarly reads as its author a male cleric who has "adopted a persona that is firmly located within traditional female confines."²⁴ Ann-Marie Rasmussen has detailed the centuries-long arguments over the authorship of the German *Winsbecke* poems, including suggestions of a clerical rather than paternal author for at least part of the *Winsbecke*,²⁵ and debates over the authenticity of the female voices in the *Winsbeckin* dialogue continue, with claims of the presence of comic and ironic elements on the one hand,²⁶ and appeals for tolerance and reconsideration of female authorship on the other.²⁷ Without

²² For catalogues of these see Alice A. Hentsch, *De la littérature didactique du moyen âge s'adressant spécialement aux femmes* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1975; Cahors: 1903); and Tauno F. Mustanoja, *The Good Wife Taught Her Daughter; The Good Wyfe Wold A Pylgremage; The Thewis of Gud Women*. *Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae*, 66 (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1948), 44–74.

²³ *The Good Wife Taught Her Daughter; The Good Wyfe Wold A Pylgremage; The Thewis of Gud Women*, 126.

²⁴ "Mother Knows Best: Reading Social Change in a Courtesy Text," *Speculum* 71 (1996): 66–86; here 78.

²⁵ "Fathers to Think Back Through: The Middle High German Mother-Daughter and Father-Son Advice Poems Known as *Die Winsbeckin* and *Der Winsbecke*," *Medieval Conduct*, ed. Kathleen Ashley and Robert L. A. Clark. *Medieval Cultures*, 29 (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 106–34.

²⁶ See Rasmussen, "'If Men Desire You, Then You are Worthy': The Didactic Mother-Daughter Poem *Die Winsbeckin*," in *Mothers and Daughters in Medieval German Literature* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 136–59; here 150–53.

²⁷ See Albrecht Classen, "Die Mutter spricht zu ihrer Tochter: Literarhistorische Betrachtungen zu einem feministischen Thema," *The German Quarterly*, 75, 1 (2002): 71–87 (last notes, inadvertently left

entering into the vexed question of proving the authenticity or inauthenticity of the parental voice in any one medieval text, what this general literary phenomenon of parental ventriloquism reveals is that medieval writers wishing to compose didactic texts for children viewed the biological parent-child relationship as important and privileged in this regard, one which conveyed to the intended recipient both authority and love. This is made explicit in the opening strophe of the *Winsbecke* which begins with the third-person narratorial voice declaring the father's devotion to the son, a concept which is then immediately repeated in the first-person voice of the father:

Ein wiser man hete einen sun,
der was im lieb, als maneger ist.
den wolte er lèren rehte tuon
und sprach alsò: "mîn sun, dû bist
mir lieb...."²⁸

[A wise man had a son
who was dear to him, as many are.
He wished to teach him to do right
and spoke thus: "My son, you are
dear to me...."]

Even more telling are the didactic texts patterned on an exchange format in which the child in turn expresses love for the instructing parent. Such an example occurs in the *Winsbeckin* where the daughter declares:

Dû lobest mich, liebiu muoter mîn,
alsam ir kint ein muoter sol.
ich lige dir in dem herzen dîn....
dû bist mir lieber danne der lîp:
der liebe ist gar mîn herze vol.²⁹

[You praise me, my beloved mother,

out in 75, 1, printed in issue 75,2 [2002]: 159).

²⁸ Strophe 1, ll. 1–5, *Winsbeckische Gedichte nebst Tirol und Fridebrant*, ed. Albert Leitzmann, 3rd rev. ed. Ingo Reiffenstein. Altddeutsche Textbibliothek, 9 (Tübingen: Max Niermeyer Verlag, 1962), 1. For a modern German translation of the *Winsbecke*, see Johann Friedrich Frischeisen, *Winsbeke: Der Windsbacher Beitrag zum Minnesang des Hochmittelalters* (Regensburg: S. Roderer Verlag, 1994), 141–65. English translations of the *Winsbecke* and *Winsbeckin* poems are mine.

²⁹ Strophe 34, ll. 1–3, 6–7, Leitzmann, *Winsbeckische Gedichte nebst Tirol und Fridebrant*, 61–62. For a modern German translation of the *Winsbeckin*, see Frischeisen, *Winsbeke*, 166–78; and Classen, *Frauen in der deutschen Literaturgeschichte: Die ersten 800 Jahre. Ein Lesebuch*. Women in German Literature, 4 (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 74–90.

just as a mother ought to praise her child.
 You love me with all your heart....
 You are dearer to me than my life:
 my whole heart is full of love.]

If medieval parents were truly indifferent to their offspring's emotions, such lines would simply not appear in instructional texts. Their presence in such texts presumably functions both to prompt filial devotion in child readers and to assure adult readers that their reward for instructing their children properly will be the attainment of their children's love and gratitude—which rather suggests that such an outcome was highly desired by the medieval parent. Indeed, the parent-child didactic text had become so well-known and conventional a genre already in medieval times that there existed parodies of it, long before Shakespeare mocked the burgeoning Renaissance didactic tradition in Polonius's sentential advice to his son Laertes (*Hamlet*, I, iii, 58–81). There are in German, for example, a Cato parody and a Winsbecke parody.³⁰

Perhaps the defining characteristic of authentic parental advice-texts was the role that experience appears to play in them. Any monk or novice-master could cull a set of lifeless but worthy moral and ethical precepts from biblical and classical texts: what marks out so many of these parental texts is the sense of a desire to teach what they themselves have learned, to pass on lived knowledge. For example, David O'Connell has found in Louis's *Enseignements* "the ever-present influence exerted upon him by the weight and breadth of his own experience, and the insight which came to him over the years as a result of that experience."³¹ When Christine advises her son on respect of women and caution regarding misogynistic texts, a key theme of her life's writings, it is explicitly such lived experience that she invokes in contradistinction to book-learning:

Ne croy pas toutes les diffames
 Qu'aucuns livres dient des femmes,
 Car il est mainte femme bonne,
 L'experience le te donne.³²

³⁰ See Hannes Kästner, *Mittelalterliche Lehrgespräche: Textlinguistische Analysen, Studien zur poetischen Funktion und pädagogischen Intention*. Philologische Studien und Quellen, 94 (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1978), 202; and Thomas Haye, *Das Lateinische Lehrgedicht im Mittelalter: Analyse einer Gattung*. Mittellateinische Studien und Texte, 22 (Leiden, New York, and Cologne: Brill, 1997), Ch. 8: "Formen der Relativierung und Parodierung," 224–41.

³¹ *The Teachings of Saint Louis: A Critical Text* 53–54.

³² *Cœuvres Poétiques de Christine de Pisan*, ed. Maurice Roy. 3 Vols (Paris: Librairie de Firmin Didot, 1896;

[Do not believe all the defamations
That some books speak about women,
For there is many a good woman:
Experience teaches you this.]

M.Y. Offord notes that the Chevalier's text is studded with "small personal incidents, autobiographical touches unusual in a work of this kind," including "the scene that he witnessed as a young soldier at the time of the siege of Aiguillon...boyhood memories of his grandmother...an experience shared with his young sisters . . . a family anecdote which gives an unforgettable picture of his father as a youth."³³

It is clear, however, that non-parental authors were equally aware of the experiential factor in parental didactic texts and, when composing their imitative texts, were often placed in the position either of attempting to include references to experientiality, or of making explicit excuses for the absence of these. For example, Riddy notes that the probably clerical author of *How the Good Wife Taught her Daughter* has his maternal speaker conclude her otherwise quite conventional set of instructions with the advice: "Now haue I taught []e, doughter, so dide my modir me."³⁴ This attempt to produce advice that can be perceived as "old-fashioned, home-spun, experiential"³⁵ indicates the author's awareness of the importance of experience in true parental didactic texts. Nevertheless, tradition is not synonymous with experientiality, even a tradition purportedly handed down from mother to daughter, and as a literary feature, experientiality was evidently not an easy quality for authors to manufacture.

Yet neither was avoiding the issue a convincing strategy. Rasmussen points out that the mother in the *Winsbeckin*, even when asked by her daughter, refuses to instruct her about love from the basis of her own experience:³⁶

Dù gihst, si habe gerüeret mich
hie vor bî mînen jungen tagen.
ob ez so hat gevüetet sich,

Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1965), Vol. 3, Strophe XXXVIII, 33. English translations of Christine's *Enseignemens* are mine, and I acknowledge the assistance of Richard Levingstone.

³³ Offord, *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, xliii.

³⁴ Mustanoja, *The Good Wife Taught Her Daughter; The Good Wyfe Wold A Pylgremage; The Thewis of Gud Women*, 172; text quoted from Henry E. Huntington Library HM 128, Stanza XXXIV, l. 204.

³⁵ Riddy, "Mother Knows Best," 78.

³⁶ "'If Men Desire You, Then You are Worthy,'" 145, 152.

dā wil ich dir niht vil von sagen.³⁷

[You say, I have been touched by it
formerly in my younger days.
If it was decreed by fate,
I wish to say nothing much to you about it].

This places the *Winsbeckin* mother in contrast with the Lady of La Tour Landry. Although we cannot be certain of the veracity of the debate over courtly love which the Chevalier of La Tour Landry recounts having had with his wife in the presence of their daughters, he does insist that the Lady's arguments against allowing their daughters to take part in courtly flirtations are in the end based on her own experience, to which she makes recourse when her more impersonal ethical arguments continue to be assailed by her husband: "Syre sayd the lady I trowe that ye wold not byleue me yf I told to you the very trouthe therof but as for to saye I haue ben prayd of loue I have many tymes perceyued how somme men were aboute to speke to me therof" ("Sire, en bonne foy je pense que vous ne m'en croiriez mie de en dire la verité. Mais quant d'estre priée, se j'eusse voulu, par maintes foyz j'ay bien apperceu qu aucuns m'en vouloient touchier").³⁸

A similar disjunction between experience and possible literary fiction becomes evident in the *Winsbeckin* when the daughter asks about the nature of love, and the mother invokes in answer the authority of Ovid, whom she calls 'a wise man': 'Ein wîser man Ovîdius / der tuot uns vons ir wunder kunt'³⁹ ('A wise man Ovid who makes known to us of its wonder'). This contrasts with the advice that real medieval women gave their charges about this prophet of sexual license. For example, in her advice to her son, Christine is scathing of, and warns him against, Ovid's disreputable teachings:

Se bien veulx et chastement vivre,
De la Rose ne lis le livre
Ne Ovide de l'Art d'amer,
Dont l'exemple fait a blasmer.⁴⁰

[If you wish to live well and chastely,
do not read the book of the Rose

³⁷ Strophe 25, ll. 1–4, Leitzmann, *Winsbeckische Gedichte nebst Tirol und Fridebrant* 58.

³⁸ Offord, *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, 173; Montaiglon, *Le Livre du Chevalier de La Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles* 260.

³⁹ Strophe 35, ll. 1–2, Leitzmann, *Winsbeckische Gedichte nebst Tirol und Fridebrant* 62.

⁴⁰ Strophe LXXVII, Roy, *Œuvres Poétiques de Christine de Pisan* 3, 39.

nor Ovid on the Art of Love
the examples of which are to be criticized.]

Another medieval woman writer who knew well, no doubt from experience, the dangers that Ovid's *Ars amatoria* could pose to the young and naïve similarly decried him. In her letter to Abelard requesting a rule for the nuns of the Paraclete (who were, as Abelard liked to remind her, her spiritual daughters), Heloise argued against mixed company at the abbess's table since "the poet himself, that master of sensuality and shame, in his book called *The Art of Love* describes in detail what an opportunity for fornication is provided especially by banquets."⁴¹ ("Ipse quoque poeta luxurie turpitudinisque doctor libro Amatorie artis intitulo quantam fornicationis occasionem convivia maxime prebeant studiose exequitur").⁴² What the words of Heloise, Christine, and perhaps also the Lady of La Tour Landry suggest is that real medieval women learnt from experience that they had cause to be wary of the unlicensed teachings on sexual love espoused by Ovid and others, and that this experience was one that they were determined both to act upon and to pass on to younger women. This highlights the critical role that experience played in medieval parental didactic texts.

Peter Abelard's *Carmen ad Astralabium*

What I would like to do now is to examine in greater detail one of these parental didactic texts, Abelard's *Carmen ad Astralabium*, to determine what it can tell us of medieval views of children. Abelard was intensely interested in the human condition. He addressed questions of the biological sex differences between males and females in his exegesis of the sixth day of creation in his *Expositio in Hexaemeron*, and the more complex questions of the gender implications associated with these biological differences absorbed and perhaps even perplexed him throughout his writing career, recurring particularly in the texts he wrote for Heloise and the nuns of the Paraclete, but remaining there largely unresolved.⁴³ In terms of life-span, Abelard was interested in the human body from the moment of conception (which he dealt with in detail in his solution to Heloise's Problem 42), and from its earliest infancy to the point of death and purgation (which he

⁴¹ Letter VI, *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, trans. Betty Radice, rev. Michael Clanchy (London: Penguin, 2003), 94.

⁴² Hicks, 89, ll. 54–57.

⁴³ Abelard's formulations of sex and gender are discussed in my "'Ut sexu sic animo: The Resolution of Sex and Gender in the *Planctus* of Abelard," forthcoming in *Medium Aevum*.

particularly treated in his *Collationes*) and beyond. What then does his poem of advice to his son tell us about his impression of childhood and youth?

Abelard opens his poem with a direct invocation to his son: "Astralabi fili, uite dulcedo paterne" ("Astralabe, my son, sweetness of a fatherly life," l. 1). This is a very telling address, because most of the texts written by Abelard during his monastic career, including the famous letters and treatises to Heloise and the nuns of the Paraclete, take a strongly anti-familial stance. Repeatedly in these works Abelard praises the importance of spiritual ties over kinship, defining, for example, Heloise's spiritual motherhood of her nuns as superior to her biological motherhood of her son.⁴⁴ Similarly, Abelard's life had been "fatherly" in many non-familial ways: as a master he had stood *in loco parentis* to the many students he taught in Paris, at the Paraclete, and elsewhere; he was specifically defined as the spiritual father of the monks of St Gildas of whom he was abbot; and he was also the spiritual father to the nuns of the Paraclete, as the founder of this convent. Here, in the first line of the *Carmen*, however, he inverts this monastic perspective. Instead, he describes his own son as the "sweetness" of a fatherly life, thereby raising this biological bond above the many other spiritual bonds he had previously prized. This is a marked concession to, and statement of, paternal sentiment on the part of Abelard.

He then launches at once into advice on learning and education,⁴⁵ and almost one of the first pieces of advice he seeks to impart to Astralabe is:

nec tibi dilecti iures in uerba magistri
nec te detineat doctor amore suo. (ll. 9–10)

[Neither should you swear by the words of a master whom you love
nor should the teacher hold you bound by his love.]

⁴⁴ See for example his claim in E V to Heloise: "O quam detestabile dampnum! Quam lamentabile incommodum, si carnalium voluptatum sordibus vaccans paucos cum dolore pareres mundo, que nunc multiplicem prolem cum exultatione parturis celo," Hicks, 82, ll. 412–15; "What a hateful loss and grievous misfortune if you had abandoned yourself to the defilement of carnal pleasures only to bear in suffering a few children for the world, when now you are delivered in exultation of numerous progeny for heaven!," *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*, 83–84. Abelard's views on family are discussed in greater detail in my "'La douceur d'une vie paternelle': la représentation de la famille dans les œuvres poétiques d'Abelard," *Pierre Abelard: Colloque international de Nantes*, ed. Jean Jolivet and Henri Habrias (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2003), 205–13.

⁴⁵ C. Stephen Jaeger discusses Abelard's educational theories as articulated in the *Carmen* in *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950–1200* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 229–30, and 233; Jaeger contextualizes Abelard as an exponent of the "new" learning of the twelfth century against the "old" learning of the eleventh century, which had been focused on eloquence and charismatic masters.

In these words Abelard indicates the propensity of youths to idolize their teachers and become their acolytes, a process that could continue despite (or indeed because of?) the corporal punishment that was the norm in medieval education. Abelard was a champion of reason, and always viewed with dismay those who abdicated this faculty in order to follow unquestioningly the dictates of others, whether philosophical or spiritual. However, he also writes from experience here of the zealousness of youth in respect of their masters, having suffered at the hands of the devoted students (such as Lotulf of Lombardy and Alberic of Rheims) of masters whom he had quarreled with, humiliated, and defeated. Moreover, his experience meshes with that described by others of his contemporaries. Most telling in this regard is the recollection of Guibert of Nogent of the love he bore for his private tutor, in spite of the daily beatings he received from this man in the name of education:

I had such a liking for him—striped as my poor little skin might have been by his many whiplashes—that I obeyed him, not out of fear (as would generally be the case in relationships like these) but out of some curious feeling of love, which overwhelmed my whole being and made me forget all his harshness.⁴⁶

It is incidentally worth noting, with respect to the issues of medieval maternal care raised in this chapter, how Guibert reports his mother reacted to the discovery of the extent of his punishment:

My mother groaned when she saw how cruelly I had been treated at such a tender age. She was disturbed and quite agitated, and her eyes filled with tears as she said: "If that's the way it's going to be, you will not become a cleric! You will not put up with this kind of punishment just to learn Latin!"⁴⁷

Abelard follows up this advice with a warning not to be taken in by a master who pours forth copious and impressive words, because prolixity is a guarantee neither of merit nor substance:

⁴⁶ *A Monk's Confession: The Memoirs of Guibert of Nogent*, trans. Paul J. Archambault (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 19. *Guibert de Nogent: Autobiographie*, ed. and trans. Edmond-René Labande. Les classiques de l'histoire de France au moyen âge, 34 (Paris: Société d'Édition 'Les Belles Lettres', 1981), 38: "Mihi vero, licet pro aetate hebeti atque pusiolo, tanta penes eum vicissitudo amoris incesserat, licet gratis multotiens cuticulam meam multis vibicibus persulcaret, ut non metu, qui in aequievis assolet, sed nescio quo medullitus insito amore, ei, totius ejus asperitatis oblitus, obsequeretur."

⁴⁷ Archambault, *A Monk's Confession*, 20; Labande, *Guibert de Nogent*, 40: "Cumque meae teneritudini ad nimium saeve illatum visceraliter doluisset, turbulenta et aestuans, et oculis moerore suffusa, 'Nunquam', ait, 'deinceps clericus fies, nec ut literas discas ulterius poenas lues!'"

Fructu, non foliis pomorum quisque cibatur
 et sensus uerbis antefendus erit.
 ornatis animos captet persuasio uerbis;
 doctrine magis est debita planities.
 copia uerborum est ubi non est copia sensus. (ll. 11–15)

[By the fruit, not by the leaves, of apples is each one fed
 and meaning must be preferred to words.
 Persuasion may seize minds with ornate words;
 to teaching plainness is rather owed.
 An abundance of words exists where there is not an
 abundance of meaning.]

He then advises careful screening of one's prospective teacher, suggesting an almost pro-active involvement in selecting an educator whose behavior and precepts match:

cuius doctrinam sibi dissentire uidebis
 nil illam certi constet habere tibi. (ll. 17–18)

[Whose teaching you see to be self-contradictory
 be sure to hold suspect.]

Indeed, Abelard proposes that education of the young need not be solely a question of the master imparting information into a willing and receptive vessel; rather, he argues, a wise master will recognize, foster and encourage the intellectual advances and perhaps even precocity of his charge:

Discipulus sapiens est gloria summa magistri;
 istius laus est illius utilitas.
 plus ab eo doctor summit quam prebeat illi
 ut conducendus sit magis hic ab eo. (ll. 907–10)

[A wise student is the highest glory of a master;
 praise of the first is the other's profit.
 The teacher draws more from him than he offers him
 so that he should rather be hired by him.]

It is easy to see in this advice an apology for his own intellectual precocity, yet clearly Abelard considers such an interactive approach to be important in a successful educative process. Nevertheless, he does not counsel insolence in the young. Obedience and diligence are the foundations of any apprenticeship, whether educational or vocational, and Abelard accordingly advises his son:

Quisquis non fuerit pociens parendo iubenti
 imperio nulli proficiendus erit;

armiger esse prius quam miles debuit omnis
quidque ageret doctor discere discipulus. (ll. 649–52)

[Whoever is not patient in obeying one in authority
will never be placed in authority over any realm;
everyone ought to be a squire before he is a knight
and what the teacher does, the student ought to learn.]

In Abelard's educational theory, therefore, there must be a balance between independent thought, careful selection of one's teacher, support from the teacher of the student's development, and yet respectful attention from students to those more learned than them. One might consider this a rather nuanced and even modern approach to children's education.

Albrecht Classen cites in his Introduction the words of Robert C. Finucane that medieval "[a]dults realized that certain types of behavior were normal aspects of childhood." This is manifestly true of Abelard who reveals his understanding of the natural fervor of youth in his strictures on moderation in religious devotion when he cautions:

religio iuuenis levis est impulsio mentis
et tamquam torrens impetuosus aque.
quo uehemencior est, citius sicabitur iste
excedensque modum deperit ille cito. (ll. 655–58)

[The religion of a youth is a capricious impulse of mind
and just like an unrestrained torrent of water.
The more violently it flows, the faster it runs dry
and, exceeding its allotted measure, it swiftly dies away.]

He then completes this teaching with an image drawn from mythology of the moderate father who arrived safely at his destination while his impetuous son acted too rashly and fell:

Dedalus ad patriam mediocri calle rediuit,
Ycarus alta petens lapsus ad ima ruit. (ll. 659–60)

[Daedalus returned to his homeland by an unremarkable pathway,
Icarus, seeking the heights, fell, hurtling to the depths.]

A similar observation on youthful zest is made by Abelard in his *Planctus Dinae* where Dinah laments the fate of Shechem, who was killed by her brothers for his effrontery in having seized her for marriage, declaring that he was too harshly treated by her brothers precisely because his youth should have been considered to have mitigated his impetuous actions:

Levis aetas iuvenilis minusque discreta
 Ferre minus a discretis debuit in poena.⁴⁸

[An age light, youthful, and less discerning,
 ought to have borne less in punishment from the discerning.]

Abelard also acknowledges the pressure that is placed on adolescents to follow the religious paths laid out for them by their families and inherited tradition. He argues that everyone—even those young enough to be required to obey their parents—must apply reason to their religious choices:

quod tot habet fidei contraria docmata mundus,
 quisque facit generis traditione sui.
 denique nullus in his rationem consulere audet (ll. 365–67)

[Because the world contains so many contrary dogmas of faith,
 each man acts according to the tradition of his people.
 In the final analysis no-one has the courage to consult reason
 in these things].

Abelard is well aware of parental pressure in such cases, but suggests that religious piety cannot be brought about by parental dictate:

his quoque quos pueros traxit deuotio patrum
 mirandum est si quid religionis inest. (ll. 1015–16)

[Likewise for those boys whom their fathers' devotion compelled to
 (the monastic life),
 it must be wondered if there is anything of religion in them.]

In matters of faith, as in matters of education, then, Abelard counsels his son to think deeply before he acts and before he binds himself to any one tradition. Here Abelard provides advice that is clearly intended to help an adolescent who is accustomed to unconsidered obedience to pedagogic and spiritual authorities develop into a pro-active, reasoning adult. This reveals a real sense of distinction in Abelard's thought between children and adults, and a clear sense of how growth from the one state to the other is to be effected. It also reveals that Abelard's poem of advice to his son is not intended simply to produce a child formed precisely according to Abelard's own personal morality. In advising his son to follow reason rather than parental tradition, Abelard recognized the chance that Astralabe could well grow up to choose a form of life different from his own:

⁴⁸ Meyer, 367, ll. 29–30.

this loss of parental authority was the price he was prepared to pay in order to counsel his child according to the best of his ability. And indeed, it appears that he may well have had to accept this return on his advice, as there is the possibility, although this remains yet unproven, that Astralabe eventually joined the Cistercian order,⁴⁹ with which Abelard, of the Benedictine order, had many personal and theological disagreements.

Albrecht Classen also notes that in medieval texts, according to Finucane, "among men displays of grief were less expected, and, in fact, may have been felt to be inappropriate for them." This observation is borne out by the *Carmen*, where Abelard evidently offers his son some training in the construction of masculinity, declaring:

Femineis lacrimis quas mors extorquet amici
non modicus pudor est ora madere uiri.
se consolanti de nati funere quidam
"mortalem," dixit, "me genuisse scio."

flesse Daud puerum morientem scimus, eoque
defuncto letum se exhibuisse suis. (ll. 993–98)

[With the womanly tears which a friend's death extracts,
it is no small shame to dampen the face of a man.
A certain man, having consoled himself at the funeral of his son,
said: "I know that I fathered a mortal."
We know that David wept over the dying boy,
and once he was dead, he presented himself to his men as
cheerful.]

Yet these observations are revealed as prescriptive ideological, social constructions, rather than descriptions of the medieval reality of grief, by Abelard's own series of *Planctus* or Laments. One of these Laments is voiced by Jacob over his sons, a surprising gender reversal of the figure of the *mater dolorosa* usually embodied by Jacob's wife Rachel.⁵⁰ Two of the Laments, including the most widely

⁴⁹ This was first suggested by the nineteenth-century historian Victor Cousin when he noticed that a mid-twelfth-century abbot of the Cistercian abbey of Hauterive in Switzerland had borne the name of Astralabe, *Fragments Philosophiques*, 2 vols (Paris: Ladrangé, 3rd ed. 1838), 2, 140. See also Brenda M. Cook, "The Shadow on the Sun: The Name of Abelard's Son," *The Poetic and Musical Legacy of Heloise and Abelard*, ed. Marc Stewart and David Wulstan. Musicological Studies, 78 (Ottawa: The Institute of Mediaeval Music, 2003), 152–55; here 155.

⁵⁰ This is discussed in more detail in my "*Quae maternae immemor naturae*: The Rhetorical Struggle over the Meaning of Motherhood in the Writings of Heloise and Abelard," *Listening to Heloise: The Voice of a Twelfth-Century Woman*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler (New York: St Martin's Press, 2000), 323–39; esp.

known and sung, the "Dolorum solatium," or the Lament of David over Jonathan and Saul, are presented in the voice of David. In the "Dolorum solatium," far from concluding his plaint and returning to an equanimous or businesslike state of mind, David ends—in almost complete contradiction to Abelard's own strictures on masculine sorrow in the *Carmen*—in a condition of tearful, overwhelming, and continuing grief:

Do quietem fidibus
vellem ut et planctibus
sic possem et fletibus.
Laesis pulsu manibus,
raucis planctu vocibus
deficit et spiritus.⁵¹

[I give rest to my lyre—
I would wish also to my laments,
and, if I could, to my tears.
With hands sore from plucking,
with voice raw from plaining,
my spirit also fails.]

Perhaps one of the most striking sections of the *Carmen* is where Abelard, discussing issues of repentance, suddenly adduces Astralabe's mother, Heloise, as evidence of lack of repentance over sexual sin, quoting from a letter (now known as her E IV) that she had sent to him:

sunt quos oblectant adeo peccata peracta
ut numquam uere peniteant super his;
ymmo uoluptatis dulcedo tanta sit huius
ne grauet ulla satisfacio propter eam.
est nostre super hoc Eloyse crebra querela
qua michi, qua secum dicere sepe solet:
"si, nisi peniteat me comississe priora,
saluari nequeam, spes michi nulla manet:
dulcia sunt adeo comissi gaudia nostri
ut memorata iuuent, que placuere nimis." (ll. 375–84)

[There are those whom the sins they have committed so delight

332–33. The gender-genre considerations of Abelard's Laments are discussed in my "*Planctus magis quam cantici: The Generic Significance of Abelard's Planctus*," *Plainsong and Medieval Music* 11 (2002): 37–44.

⁵¹ Meyer, 374, ll. 59–64.

that they can never truly repent of them;
 or rather, the sweetness of this pleasure is so great
 that no penance done on its account can ever carry
 weight.

There is the frequent complaint of our Heloise on this matter
 which she is often wont to say to me and to herself:
 "If, unless I repent of what I earlier committed,
 I cannot be saved, no hope remains for me:
 so sweet are the joys of what we did
 that those things, which pleased too much, help when
 remembered."]

Modern readers might find it rather insensitive of a father to include in a didactic text addressed to his son an image of that boy's mother (who was at this time an abbess) as sexually wanton—and there is evidence that medieval readers were perhaps no less perplexed or disturbed by this unwarranted personal turn.⁵² But I believe the key to this enigma lies in the word "dulcedo." Abelard declares that the "sweetness" ("dulcedo") of Heloise's delight is so great that she cannot forget her former sexual union with Abelard. Yet the word "dulcedo" also appears elsewhere in the *Carmen*: in the opening line where, as discussed above, Abelard addresses his son as the "uite dulcedo paterne" ("sweetness of a fatherly life"). Suddenly a causal connection appears between the two concepts: Heloise's joy in having been sexually active is specifically linked to Abelard's delight in his fatherhood. In other words, Abelard subtly suggests to Astralabe that his mother's joy lies not in her sexual wantonness, but in the fruits of that wantonness: her motherhood of him. Abelard thus establishes for Astralabe an identity as a son beloved of his mother. This is quite crucial in any discussion of medieval parenthood, because it implies that Abelard believed this kind of familial identity and sense of maternal love was important enough to Astralabe to embed it in a text of otherwise philosophical and ethical advice.

Nor is this purely a question of Abelard constituting for his son the sort of patriarchal lineage common to medieval texts. Abelard is not telling Astralabe here of his bloodlines, but informing him of the emotional content of those bloodlines. Indeed, Abelard had a monastic contempt for worldly status and the idea of inherited nobility, stating in the *Carmen*:

⁵² This passage is found complete only in Recension I manuscripts of the *Carmen*; Recension II includes nothing more than an abbreviated version of the quoted letter which does not identify Heloise as the author, and Recension III omits the passage altogether. The details and possible rationales for these varying transmissions are discussed in Ruys and Ward, *The Repentant Abelard*.

si de principiis presumptio gaudet eorum,
 exitus incertus sollicitet magis hos.
 De propria gaude, non de uirtute tuorum:
 nil precii confert laus aliena tibi. (ll. 463–64; 477–78)

[If their pride concerning their origins delights them,
 an uncertain end should concern them more.
 Rejoice in your own virtue, not that of your family:
 praise of another contributes nothing of value to you.]

On the contrary, his concern is demonstrably in the formation of his son's sense of identity—a sense of identity that some scholars have argued did not, or could not, exist in the medieval or premodern subject.⁵³

In indicating to Astralabe that he is remembered with delight by his mother, Abelard perhaps develops and takes up the challenge of the allusions that Heloise placed in her *Problemata* regarding her love for her son and her distress at her separation from him. The *Problemata* consist of forty-two questions directed to Abelard on scriptural, doctrinal, and theological issues that Heloise claims occurred to herself and her nuns during their biblical studies. Yet buried in the midst of these is a series of five questions, *Problemata* 31–35, which seem to be much less theologically complex than their companions, and which deal with the story of Hannah and her dedication of her son Samuel to the Temple. These questions specifically evoke Hannah's desire for a son, her great joy in her pregnancy, and her wish to minister to her son's temporal needs even after he had been dedicated to holy service, and as such can be read as powerful suggestions of Heloise's own maternal delight in and longing for her estranged son.⁵⁴ Indeed, Eva Parra Membrives's chapter in this volume outlines in greater detail not only that medieval mothers both recognized and acknowledged their maternal love for their children in their writings, but that this love was often the trigger for those literary acts.

⁵³ David Aers has critiqued such alterity-driven views of the Middle Ages as producing a world in which there are "no nuclear families . . . no individual subjectivities," "A Whisper in the Ear of Early Modernists; or, Reflections on Literary Critics Writing the 'History of the Subject,'" *Culture and History 1350–1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities and Writing*, ed. David Aers (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 177–202; here 193. Similarly, Lyndal Roper identifies "such concepts as family, individual and subjectivity" as the key areas through which proponents of alterity posit a "radical psychic difference between early modern people and ourselves" in *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 227.

⁵⁴ *Patrologia Latina* 178: 714D–717B. This is discussed in more detail in my "Quae maternae immemor naturae," 331–32.

In dealing with the issue of Heloise's love for her son in the *Carmen*, Abelard also anticipates the several modern novelists who have been concerned to restore maternal love and familial identity to Astralabe. George Moore included an extended meditation upon Astralabe's nature, character, and relationship with his mother Heloise in his 1921 two-volume novel *Héloïse and Abelard*. Two authors have more recently focused upon the character of Astralabe in terms of the psychology of his situation of apparent parental abandonment. Christa Laird's children's novel on the subject, tellingly entitled *The Forgotten Son* (1990), ends with the reconciliatory first meeting in many years between the angry and confused Astralabe, now an adolescent, and his mother; and Luise Rinser's novel *Abelard's Love* (*Abaelards Liebe*, 1991) is a complex study on the nature of love told from the point of view of the character Astralabe who is, again, struggling to define himself within a family relationship that appears to exclude him.⁵⁵ A contrary view of Astralabe's situation is found, however, in the work of Sharan Newman, whose Catherine LeVendeur medieval detective novels *The Devil's Door* (1994) and *Strong as Death* (1996) present the adolescent Astralabe (an incidental character in both works) as enjoying a close and easy relationship with both his parents. What I wish to suggest by adducing these modern novels is that the desire demonstrated by these authors to restore to Astralabe, in one way or another, his family situation is not merely the product of a modern, post-Freudian concept of parent-child relationships; on the contrary, a child's need for a family identity was understood by Abelard and treated, albeit subtly, in the text he wrote for his son.

Indeed, it is precisely this understanding which can explain two otherwise difficult passages in the *Carmen*. Where Abelard argues:

Miror si mulier priuignum diligit ulla
ni quo Fedra modo fertur amasse suum. (ll. 447–48)

[I wonder if any woman loves her step-son
except in that way in which Phaedra is held to have loved
hers.]

these words at first appear rather shocking, an unwarranted indictment on step-mothers, motivated by no particular development of preceding argument. But what they offer, I believe, is further evidence of Abelard's attempt to distinguish, and hierarchize, biological motherhood over all other forms of mothering. By suggesting that only a biological mother can have a pure love for her son — Phaedra having famously succumbed to sexual desire for her step-son Hippolytus — Abelard

⁵⁵ For a critique, see Albrecht Classen, "Abelard and Heloise's Love Story from the Perspective of their Son Astrolabe: Luise Rinser's Novel *Abelard's Love*," *Rocky Mountain Review* 11 (2003): 9–31.

relates to Astralabe that despite the other forms of mothering that he might have experienced in his life, such as while fostered with Abelard's sister Denise in Brittany, nothing can replace or even approach the love that his biological mother, Heloise, bears for him. Similarly, when Abelard argues a few lines later:

si sua quam mater cuiquam sit carior uxor,
constat naturam cedere luxurie. (ll. 473–74)

[if a wife should be dearer to any man than his own mother,
it is agreed that

Nature yields to lust.]

he is again stating the primacy of maternal love. He points out that in the proper order of things, when Nature rather than lust rules the hierarchy of relationships, there is no love more acceptable than that between a mother and her son. During the twelfth century marriage began to be viewed as a sacrament, expressing the bond between Christ and his Church;⁵⁶ even so, Abelard suggests that no marital or sexual relationship between a man and a woman can ever be considered superior to that between a son and his mother. These powerful discussions of biological maternal love, quite removed from the otherwise more impersonally ethical content of the *Carmen*, reveal Abelard's far from medieval concern with Astralabe's understanding of himself both as a son and a beloved member of a family.

Abelard's didactic poem for his son therefore addresses issues of the education and religious observances of youths, demonstrates an understanding of the passions and behaviors typical of adolescents as distinguished from adults, and expends some effort in creating for its recipient a sense of his familial identity, particularly with regard to maternal love. Clearly this poem was written for a child by a medieval author who was well aware of, conversant with, and interested in childhood as a state separate from adulthood.

Yet it is important to make the distinction that this poem, for all Abelard's apparent understanding of childhood, is neither childlike nor childish in its conception and execution. Abelard was a complex, innovative, and controversial thinker in the disciplines of philosophy, theology, and ethics, and this poem

⁵⁶ This development is particularly marked in the works of Hugh of St Victor (*De sacramentis*) and Peter Lombard (*Liber Sententiarum*). See, for example, Gabriel Le Bras, "Le mariage dans la theologie et le droit de l'Eglise du XI^e au XIII^e siecle," *Cahiers de civilisation medievale*, 11 (1968): 191–202; here 193–94; Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence In Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 135–39; and Neil Cartlidge, *Medieval Marriage: Literary Approaches, 1100–1300* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 13 n. 42, 16 and 17.

presents a summary of his thoughts as expressed in his mature scholastic works such as the *Theologia Christiana*, *Ethica seu Scito te ipsum*, and *Collationes*. There is no sense that Abelard, in constructing the *Carmen*, tempered the concepts he was presenting in order to make them more amenable to, or palatable for, a juvenile audience; indeed, the importance of the ideas he offers in the *Carmen* is evidenced by the fact that quotations from it appeared in medieval theological florilegia alongside citations from traditional *auctoritates* such as Jerome, Ambrose, and Abelard's contemporary Bernard of Clairvaux.⁵⁷

Moreover, unlike novice instruction manuals or the later conduct texts written in imitation of parental didactic texts, the *Carmen* does not offer a straightforward *modus vivendi*. Its lessons are conceptual and ethical rather than programmatic or procedural; instead of explaining to his son how to behave in any particular situation, Abelard offers Astralabe a set of principles that he must develop the wisdom to apply appropriately. Nor is the language of the *Carmen* simple: many of the distichs contain sparse or allusive grammatical and syntactic structures, to the extent that the medieval glossator of the manuscript P (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, nouvelles acquisitions latines 561, late twelfth century) began to provide simplistic interlinear explanations and expansions of the grammar and vocabulary, presumably to aid younger readers. In Abelard's text, then, there is no concession to these intended younger readers: the youth of the reader is acknowledged in the nature of the instruction offered, but there is a sense that Abelard nevertheless expects this reader to apply himself to the comprehension of both the poem's words and content.

Nor, finally, is the *Carmen* a sentimental text. Its references to paternal and maternal love are allusive, literary, and few. Far more warm and appealing portraits of family life were presented by Abelard in his Hymns, where he depicted loving family relationships between God the Father, Mary the Mother, and Jesus their beloved only-born son, and in his *Planctus* where the pain, loss, and love of human relationships are powerfully and poetically depicted with regard to families from the Old Testament.⁵⁸

Abelard's *Carmen ad Astralabium* must make us think again about the nature of parent-child relationships in the Middle Ages and the medieval view of children. Clearly childhood was perceived as a separate stage of life possessing its own typical behaviors and requiring its own forms of instruction. Nevertheless, childhood was not for this reason sentimentalized in a fashion that would become synonymous with the nineteenth century, nor did authors condescend to children

⁵⁷ This is discussed in more detail in Ruys and Ward, *The Repentant Abelard*.

⁵⁸ See my "La douceur d'une vie paternelle" for further details of these depictions.

with simplistic texts or diluted concepts. There appears to be an understanding that instruction was a serious matter that required advanced forms of comprehension which children had to learn to develop for themselves. It is not true that familial feeling is completely absent from Abelard's text: on the contrary, at certain points in the text the power of Abelard's love for his son, and his desire that Astralabe should similarly comprehend his mother's love for him, shine through. Yet these sentiments are on the whole subordinated by Abelard to the more important task of equipping his son to lead a moral, ethical, and spiritual life that would avoid the many pitfalls and mistakes of which Abelard was able to warn him, both through the observations of a full and active life, and quite often too through bitter personal experience. In this we see, as with the other medieval parental authors who wrote didactic texts for their children, medieval parental instruction as an indicator of parental love.

David F. Tinsley

(University of Puget Sound)

Reflections of Childhood in Medieval Hagiographical Writing

The Case of Hartmann von Aue's *Der arme Heinrich*

I. Introduction

Even the most cursory survey of scholarship on medieval childhood would lead one to conclude that the only task remaining for opponents of Philippe Aries' thesis—"a concept of childhood did not emerge until the early modern period"—is to compose a suitable epitaph. Nicholas Orme is but the most recent scholar of medieval childhood to challenge Aries, when he asserts that "adults regarded childhood as a distinct phase or phases of life; that parents treated children like children as well as like adults, that they did so with care and sympathy, and that children had cultural activities and possessions of their own."¹ Albrecht Classen's wide-ranging and thoughtful introduction to this volume culminates in the conclusion "that the paradigm established and popularized by Philippe Aries. . . now can be discarded" (46). Clearly, as Classen notes, a paradigm shift in our understanding of medieval childhood is almost complete. Yet in rejecting Aries' thesis, most scholars have not gone so far as to proclaim medieval and modern notions of childhood to be identical. So scholars of medieval mentalities now face the challenge of resetting the boundaries between medieval and modern notions

¹ See Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 5. See also Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1990); Barbara Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London: the Experience of Childhood in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); James A. Schultz, *The Knowledge of Childhood in the German Middle Ages, 1100–1350*. Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995); Ronald C. Finucane, *The Rescue of the Innocents: Endangered Children in Medieval Miracles* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); and Danièle Alexandre-Bidon and Didier Lett, *Children in the Middle Ages: Fifth-Fifteenth Centuries*, trans. Jody Gladdings (Notre Dame, IN.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999).

of adulthood and childhood. And when all is said and done, it is my belief that some aspects of alterity will survive.²

Medieval mentalities differ most substantially from those of the modern, secular West in their consistent validation of divine presence in human existence. Such validation took on both a diachronic and synchronic dimension, in the form of salvation history on the one hand and sainthood on the other. The medieval apocalyptic imagination engendered cycles of anxiety regarding the imminent end of time, the acuteness of which our modern sensibilities can scarcely imagine.³ Medieval assumptions regarding the omnipresence of the Divine were personalized in the universal veneration of the saints. Saints were seen as "persons who are leading or have led a life of heroic virtue."⁴ The presence of the Divine is validated by superhuman actions in the areas of asceticism, contemplation, and action, and by verifiable miracles and visions.⁵ The power to convert and to heal extended beyond the grave; cults surrounding saints' relics indicate that their posthumous healing powers were seen as harbingers of salvation.⁶ The records of saints' lives and miracles in the form of hagiography comprised the most popular literary genre of the Middle Ages. Given this popularity, one can assume a basic familiarity of medieval audiences with the lives of the saints. In the following pages I shall use the examples of saintly children drawn from hagiography to examine medieval attitudes toward children in general, as reflected in a literary portrait of the social anomaly of the saintly child.

Reading a Middle High German literary text as a mirror of historical attitudes toward children requires meticulous attention to the limitations of genre on the one hand and the expectations of the intended audience on the other. As Albrecht Classen reminds us, "Literary texts do not allow a straightforward interpretation

² I use this term as defined by the medievalist Hans Robert Jauss, not as adapted by post-colonial theorists. See Hans Robert Jauss, *Alterität und Modernität der mittelalterlichen Literatur: Gesammelte Aufsätze 1956–1976* (Munich: W. Fink, 1977), 9–47. James Schultz makes this same point a bit more polemically in his review of Orme's book: "He is unwilling to acknowledge that there are both similarities and differences between medieval and modern childhood, that the similarities and differences fit together in an historically specific idea of childhood, and that, as part of such an historical construct, even the similarities become differences, because their different context gives them meanings different from the ones they have today." See *Medievalia et Humanistica* 30 (2004): 158–59; here 159.

³ See Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages*. Records of Civilization, Sources and Studies, 96 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); Richard Kenneth Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages: a Study of Medieval Apocalypticism, Art, and Literature* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981); and Richard Kenneth Emmerson and Ronald B. Herzman, *The Apocalyptic Imagination in Medieval Literature*. Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).

⁴ Richard Kieckhefer and George Doherty Bond, *Sainthood: its Manifestations in World Religions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 11–13.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 4–5.

determined by socio-historical, anthropological, and mental-historical criteria" unless scholars remain acutely sensitive to "the specific nature and informational value of narratives" (Classen, 3).⁷ Even scholars of "mentalité," who deny to medieval literature the status of historical documentation, proceed cautiously when employing saints' lives as sources for historical attitudes.⁸ Hagiographers were, after all, more concerned with spiritual than with chronological growth. More often than not, as Goodich points out, "the early years are given in the barest outline."⁹ Goodich's statistics would also seem to indicate that saints' lives offer a less than promising source for studying medieval notions of childhood: "Of the over five hundred saints who became the objects of local or universal cults from 1215 to 1334, perhaps no more than ten percent possess reliable data concerning their early years."¹⁰ Furthermore, as Siegfried Ringer has argued in his studies of the Dominican *Sisterbooks* of the fourteenth century, it is problematical to use any statements contained in hagiographical or mystagogical literature as evidence for reconstructing historical reality, however one might define it. In denying that the stories of the *Sisterbooks* reflect the reality of fourteenth-century Dominican life, Ringer sees these texts consisting in "motifs, sets of images, accounts of miracles and visions, and of special instances of God's grace that have been, either consciously or subconsciously, taken from earlier literary sources."¹¹ When examining hagiographical sources, then, one must consider the possibility that one is dealing with "stock literary weapons of the hagiographers or retrospective justifications for greatness."¹²

⁷ Many of these issues have been debated by historians in the context of New Historicism. See Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000) for a update on the details of this debate.

⁸ For useful studies of the depiction of saintly childhood, see Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell, *Saints & Society: the Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000–1700* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982); Michael Goodich, *Vita perfecta: the Ideal of Sainthood in the Thirteenth Century*. Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters, 25 (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1982); and the anthologies by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Tímea Klara Szell, *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991); and Kieckhefer and Bond, *Sainthood*.

⁹ Goodich, *Vita perfecta*, 82.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ "Motive und Bildkomplexe, Wunder, Visionen und besondere Gnadenauszeichnungen - sei[en] bewusst oder unbewusst aus früheren literarischen Quellen übernommen." This skeptical perspective, as elucidated in Siegfried Ringer, *Viten- und Offenbarungsliteratur in Frauenklöstern des Mittelalters: Quellen und Studien*. Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters, 72 (Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1980), 13, provoked a polemical response from the historian Peter Dinzelsbacher. The resulting debate illuminated many key issues surrounding the value of medieval didactic sources for historians. See Peter Dinzelsbacher, "Zur Interpretation erlebnismystischer Texte des Mittelalters," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 117 (1984): 1–23. Frank Tobin offers an insightful summary and analysis of the debate in Frank J. Tobin, *Mechthild von Magdeburg: a Medieval Mystic in Modern Eyes* (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, 1995), 110–25.

¹² Goodich, *Vita perfecta*, 85.

Paradoxically, the nature of sainthood itself makes the few surviving accounts of saintly childhoods a surprisingly rich source for medieval notions of normality. By definition, sainthood finds expression in transcending human limits and the resulting violation of social norms. And if one has the need to document the saintly nature of an individual, inevitably such abnormal behavior is seen to begin in the early years. These descriptions of saintly children's behavior are frequently contrasted with how normal children behave. The beloved topos "quasi senex" or "puer senex," as employed in the *vita* of Hedwig of Poland provides just one example. "From the time she was a small child she had the demeanor of an old woman, trying as an old person would to practice good morals, and to flee the inconstant lifestyles and insolence of other children."¹³ A more detailed example may be found in Athanasius' portrait of the young Antony:

He could not endure to learn letters, not caring to associate with other boys; but all his desire was, as it is written of Jacob, to live a plain man at home. With his parents he used to attend the Lord's House, and neither as a child was he idle nor when older did he despise them; but was both obedient to his father and mother and attentive to what was read, keeping in his heart what was profitable in what he heard. And though as a child brought up in moderate affluence, he did not trouble his parents for varied or luxurious fare, nor was this a source of pleasure to him; but was content simply with what he found nor sought anything further.¹⁴

When we assess saintly behavior in such cases, we infer medieval expectations of normal childhood by observing what saintly children do not do. Antony is abnormal in his desire for solitude, in his willingness to stay at home, in his industriousness, in his respectful treatment of his parents, in his attentiveness to the holy word, in his ability to retain knowledge, in his lack of interest in material possessions, and in his moderation. From this one may conclude that expectations of normal children or at least boys would have included always wanting to be with their friends, being away from home, idleness, disobedience and disrespect, in attentiveness, lack of interest in church, prodigality, and dissatisfaction. We may infer from the "vita of Hedwig" that one expected children to be immoral, to practice inconstant lifestyles, and to be insolent to their elders. This correlates with the results from Goodich's study, where bad habits ascribed to children include "love of games and other vain pursuits, absentmindedness, pettiness, putting, shamelessness and changeability."¹⁵ Lest one object that these examples are drawn from saints' lives written before the Middle Ages and therefore do not necessary reflect medieval notions of childhood, one can find many similar examples from

¹³ "A sua pueritia cor gerens, senile satagabat; levitas vitando, bonos assuescere mores et insolentios fugere juveniles" *Acta sanctorum* (October 17, VIII): 224, cited in *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁴ <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/vita-antony.html> (last accessed on March 14, 2005).

¹⁵ Goodich, *Vita perfecta*, 89.

the legends of medieval men and women. Not only that, but the proliferation of hagiography in the manuscript record indicates that such depictions of saintly and normal childhood were among the most popular objects of literary consumption in the European Middle Ages.

Such exemplary abnormality or saintliness should be differentiated from what one might call supernatural abnormality, characterized by superhuman feats made possible by the infusion of the Holy Spirit. The *vita* of St. Nicholas, the patron saint of children, contains several examples of such saintly precociousness.

On the first day of his life, as they wanted to bathe St. Nicholas, the child stood up in his wash basin. He also freely chose not to nurse at his mother's breast on Wednesdays and Fridays, not once. When the child was older it separated itself from the things that other young people took pleasure in, choosing instead to go to church with great devotion and whatever he understood there of the holy scriptures, he earnestly maintained in his memory.¹⁶

Nicholas displays here the power to stand when he is a day old, he demonstrates a willingness to fast as a nursing infant, and as a young boy he can understand scripture than many adults struggle to comprehend. Here saintly virtue is not set against normality, but rather extraordinary power is depicted in the moment it emerges from the helplessness universal to all human infants.

Whenever such saintly precociousness surfaces, it has serious social consequences, especially for parental authority. As Mary Dzon shows elsewhere in this volume, challenges to authority extended even to the Holy Family, as "apocryphal narrators imagined the interaction that took place between the boy Jesus, his parents, and their Jewish neighbors." The frequency of conflict in Middle English adaptations of the fifteenth-century apocryphal text *Liber de infantia salvatoris* allows Dzon to reconstruct considerable interest among audiences of vernacular religious literature for such topics. She documents speculation about Jesus' childhood before his entry into public life in both literature and iconography dating back to the twelfth century. The Anglo-Norman *Holkham Bible* depicts Jesus doing chores for his parents, while Dzon also cites the twelfth-century tale of Aelred of Rievault concerning Jesus' consideration of the needs of his mother and his nurse. Susan Marti's study of the Engelberg codices cites numerous apocryphal accounts of Jesus' childhood in both vernacular and Middle Latin texts of the 12th and 13th centuries.¹⁷ Of special interest to my study are the stories from the cycle

¹⁶ "Des ersten Tages, da man Sanct Nicolaus das Kindlein baden sollte, da stund es aufrecht in dem Becken, und wollte auch am Mittwoch und Freitag nicht mehr denn einmal saugen seiner Mutter Brust. Als das Kind zu Jahren kam, schied es sich von den Freuden der anderen Jünglinge und suchte die Kirchen mit Andacht; und was er da verstand von der heiligen Schrift, das behielt er mit Ernst in seinem Sinne. Als sein Vater und seine Mutter tot waren, begann er zu betrachten, wie er den großen Reichtum verzehre in Gottes Lob und nicht zu der Ehre der Menschen."

¹⁷ "In der volkssprachlichen wie der lateinischen religiösen Dichtung des 12. und 13. Jahrhunderts sind

that highlight conflicts between paternal authority and Jesus' higher calling. Apparently the incongruity inherent in Joseph's attempts to raise a divine son was the object of considerably audience interest throughout the Middle Ages.

Weinstein and Bell show how similar themes of generational conflict proliferated in the hagiography of the thirteenth and fourteenth century. Such "childhood crises" are documented in "every country of Europe," they are "not limited to a particular religious order" and they extend to every social class.¹⁸ From hagiographical tales of social and family conflict, Weinstein and Bell draw inferences that clearly contradict Aries: "Medieval adults expected children to behave in certain ways and to go through certain stages of development. Parents were intensely involved with their children's upbringing and concerned with their welfare. They reared them in accordance with their station and conscientiously tried to prepare them for life tasks. Even if they designated their children for a life in religion, they had socially conventional notions of what that kind of life entailed. They felt love for their children and expressed their affection and concern with praise and with punishment."¹⁹ Such concerns with praise and punishment could be put to the test whenever a child sought a higher calling through the power of the spirit. "A family that had a saintly child was likely to be put under great strain, even to the breaking point, particularly if the child was a girl."²⁰ In these latter cases, conventional notions of childhood may be inferred not only from negative and positive extrapolations of saintly abnormality, but also from the sanctioning or punitive responses of parents.

In the following section I shall analyze a vernacular didactic tale composed for a courtly setting in which such a "childhood crisis" occupies one of two parallel plot lines. The aim will be to re-imagine the response to such a text of a courtly audience well-versed in hagiography.²¹ My intertextual reading will transpire according to the categories developed in the previous section, in particular notions of normality which may be inferred from the behavior of saintly children and parental prohibitions as described in hagiography. Conventional hagiography sought in its documentation of selfless conduct and posthumous miracles the ultimate vindication of papal imprimatur. Descriptions of saintly children serve

apokryphe Ereignisse aus der Kindheit Jesu, besonders die Wundertaten während der Flucht, beliebt." See Susan Marti, *Malen, Schreiben und Beten: die spätmittelalterliche Handschriftenproduktion im Doppelkloster Engelberg*. Zürcher Schriften zur Kunst-, Architektur- und Kulturgeschichte, 3 (Zürich: Zip, 2002), 207–10; here 208.

¹⁸ Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, 45.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 46

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Since most Middle High German collections date back only to the early fifteenth century, I shall use the most popular and widely disseminated collection of hagiography of the High Middle Ages, Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*. All quotations from the *Golden Legend* are taken from Jacobus and William Granger Ryan, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*. 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

as retrospectively presented harbingers of holiness for the reader/listeners accustomed to hearing how a character like Moses in the Old Testament to prefigure the coming of Christ. Depictions of a saint's childhood tend to describe it in two phases: childhood and adolescence, the first of which was devoted more to precociousness, the second more to vocation.²²

II. The Sainly Child as a Source of Conflict in Hartmann von Aue's *Der arme Heinrich*

I now turn to the didactic tale *Der arme Heinrich* ("Poor Henry"), written in Middle High German by the twelfth-century *ministerialis* Hartmann von Aue.²³ "Poor Henry" is not a saint's life, but it is germane to our study of childhood because Hartmann uses the motif of the healing bath in children's blood from the Silvester legends and the child-sacrifice story from the Engelhard accounts that Classen analyzes in our introduction in order to explore the saintly childhood as a social problem.²⁴ In Hartmann's tale the question of saintliness is left open to interpretation by the child's parents, and, in turn, by Hartmann's reader/listeners. Hartmann explores saintliness as a possibility, and he clearly expected his audience to make their judgments regarding the status of his peasant virgin heroine based upon their familiarity with extraordinary behaviors common to hagiography.²⁵

²² This division also favored particular themes, that of childhood neglect and deprivation for the first phase and that of challenges to parental authority in matters of vocation in the second. See Goodich, *Vita perfecta*, 82 and 100.

²³ Hartmann is famous as the first adaptor of Arthurian romance in Middle High German. His reworkings of Chretien de Troye's *Yvain* and *Erec* have become classics of the German Middle Ages. He also wrote *Minnesang*, a discourse on courtly love, and a religious epic *Gregorius*. For what little we know of Hartmann's life, see "Hartmann von Aue" Kurt Ruhe et al., ed., *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, 2., völlig Neubearb. Aufl. (Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 1977), and Andre Vauchez, R. B. Dobson, and Michael Lapidge, *Encyclopedia of the Middle Ages* (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2000).

²⁴ For the voluminous secondary literature on Hartmann's *Der arme Heinrich*, see Christoph Cormeau and Wilhelm Störmer, *Hartmann von Aue: Epoche, Werk, Wirkung. Arbeitsbücher zur Literaturgeschichte* (Munich: Beck, 1985), 142–59. Will Hasty's summary of scholarship on *Der arme Heinrich* is also useful. See Will Hasty, *Adventures in Interpretation: the Works of Hartman von Aue and Their Critical Reception. Literary Criticism in Perspective* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1996), 68–78. See also Petra Hörner, *Hartmann von Aue: mit einer Bibliographie 1976–1997. Information und Interpretation*, 8 (Frankfurt am Main and; New York: P. Lang, 1998).

²⁵ In one sense, I am returning to the interpretations of the fifties when commentators depicted the peasant daughter as a saintly presence who guides Heinrich on the path to salvation. For just one example, see Bert Nagel, *Der arme Heinrich Hartmanns von Aue: eine Interpretation. Handbücherei der Deutschkunde*, 6 (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1952). Reading Hartmann's tale through the perspective of hagiography makes a straightforward interpretation like Nagel's untenable. Saintliness can only be examined as an open question.

Der arme Heinrich tells a cautionary tale of sin and repentance as depicted in two lives, the knight Sir Heinrich of Aue and a peasant girl whom he encounters on one of his feudal estates. Sir Heinrich is a noble knight of splendid reputation who enjoys all the advantages of courtly life, only to be struck down by leprosy²⁶ and condemned to a life of suffering and social ostracism.²⁷ After traveling to Salerno to seek a conventional cure, Heinrich abandons his quest when he learns that the only possible treatment requires the blood of a girl of marriageable age who would willingly sacrifice herself for him. Convinced that no such person could ever be found ("It is so impossible that anyone would willingly suffer death for my sake. For this reason I shall have to bear this scandalous and awful fate until I die," 453–57),²⁸ he retires to spend his final days on the land of one of his peasant overseers.²⁹ The audience would have seen the noble Heinrich seeking refuge with a peasant family, however prosperous, as the final sign of his fall. The hand of God humbles him, taking him from the elite circles of Swabian courts to the rustic isolation of a rich peasant's abode in the wilderness.

In the throes of disgrace and despair, Heinrich makes the acquaintance of the second protagonist, the eight-year-old daughter of the Meier.³⁰ The peasant girl's

²⁶ Saul Nathaniel Brody, *The Disease of the Soul: Leprosy in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974), 147–97, surveys the literary depiction of leprosy with specific reference to Hartmann (148–58).

²⁷ For a survey of earlier scholarly opinion on the issue of Heinrich's guilt, see "Heinrichs Sturz" in Barbara Könnecker, *Hartmann von Aue: Der arme Heinrich* (Frankfurt: Diesterweg, 1987), 61–66. See also Hasty, *Adventures*, 72–73 and Ronald Finch, "Guilt and Innocence in Hartmann's *Der arme Heinrich*," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 73 (1972): 642–52.

²⁸ *nû ist genuoc unmügelich, daz ir deheiniu durch mich gerne lide den tût. des muoz ich schântliche not tragen unz an mîn ende* (453–57). All quotations from Hartmann's text are from Hartmann von Aue, *Der arme Heinrich*, 17., durchgesehene Auflage. Altdeutsche Textbibliothek, 3 (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 2001). For a reliable translation of Hartmann's tale, see Hartmann von Aue, *Arthurian Romances, Tales, and Lyric Poetry: the Complete Works of Hartmann von Aue*, trans. Frank J. Tobin, Kim Vivian, and Richard H. Lawson (University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001). Unless otherwise indicated, however, all English translations of Hartmann in this article are my own.

²⁹ Hartmann uses the terms "frier buman" (269) and "meier" (295), which Lexer defines as "peasant," "ploughman," or "tenant farmer". See Matthias Lexer, *Mittelhochdeutsches Handwörterbuch*, 3 vols. (1872–1878; Stuttgart: S. Hirzel, 1992), here Vol. 1, 381 and 2074–75. A "meier" was a kind of overseer who administered the lands in his lord's name and settled minor legal disputes. This Meier's wealth and good fortune are attributed to the just rule and protection offered by Heinrich (269–84).

³⁰ Two recent interpretations shift the interpretative focus from the parallel protagonists who learned from each other's fates, a view championed by Cormeau, to the tale of Heinrich's fate alone. David Duckworth traces Heinrich's inner evolution from goodness to true charity in light of medieval theological treatises on love. See David Duckworth, "Heinrich and the Power of Love in Hartmann's Poem," *Mediaevistik* 14 (2001): 31–82. This represents a modification of some of the views previously advanced in David Duckworth, *The Leper and the Maiden in Hartmann's Der arme Heinrich*. Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 627 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1996). Albrecht Classen proposes that we read the peasant's daughter allegorically, as part of Heinrich's inner landscape. See Albrecht Classen, "Herz und Seele in Hartmanns von Aue 'Der arme Heinrich.' Der mittelalterliche Dichter als Psychologe?," *Mediaevistik* 14 (2001): 7–30.

very first reaction sends a powerful signal to the audience of her extraordinary potential. Even as others shun Henry's hideousness, with its disfigurement a certain sign of sin and evil,³¹ she seeks him out. ("She devoted herself with all the goodness of an innocent child to her Lord, so that she could be found at any time at his feet. With touching devotion she attended to her Lord, and he came to love her, too" (321–25).³² The relationship that develops between the noble knight and the peasant maiden during Heinrich's exile has few precedents in medieval literature and certainly would have captured the attention of Hartmann's audience. It has usually been read against vernacular literary sources as a kind of playful take on courtly love using motifs from *Minnesang*.³³ Heinrich rewards her goodness and devotion with a number of gifts, including mirrors, hair bands, belts and rings. She is drawn to him, the narrator explains, because children can be easily swayed by gifts (334–35). This added bit of information supports the inference that a maiden would not achieve a "heimlich" (intimate) relationship with a knight, unless she were so young as not yet to be susceptible to such gifts. And indeed her steadfast devotion and service bring Heinrich to the point that he playfully terms her his "gemahel" (wife or bride, 341).

This "courtship" takes on an different aspect when read against hagiography. The narrator sends a signal to the audience that they may judge her according to saintly forbears when he reminds the audience that more than the desire for gifts motivates the Meier's daughter: It is above all her "süezer geist" (her virtuous spirit) which is "gotes gebe" (a gift from God, 348). The reference to the daughter's divine gifts stands in contrast to the worldly wealth and eroticism symbolized by the ring, the mirror, and the girdle. Indeed, similar gifts or the promise of the same from a "suitor" to an innocent young maiden are a common motif from the lives of virgin martyrs such as Agnes. "He promised her jewels and great wealth if she consented to be his wife."³⁴ Given Heinrich's "fallen" status in this stage of the tale, a hagiographical reading would see the courtship in terms of temptation. The possibility that the audience would place Heinrich into the role of the "pagan"

³¹ Cormeau notes: "Der Aussatz ist im Mittelalter eine tabuisierte Krankheit; ihn als Geißel und Strafe Gottes anzusehen, lehrt schon das Alte Testament. . . . Diese archaische Auffassung mischt sich mit einem bildhaft allegorischen *topos* der mittelalterlichen Predigt: die Sünde als Aussatz der Seele." See Cormeau and Störmer, *Epoche*, 146. See also Brody, *Leprosy*, 60–106.

³² si hete gar ir gemüete mit reiner Kindes güete an ir herren gewant, daz man si zallen ziten vant under sinem fuoze. mit süezer unmüoze wonte si ir herren bî. dar zuo liebet er ouch sî (321–25).

³³ Among the vernacular literary genres in which encounters do occur between knights and young maidens, the sexual play and license of the pastourelle may be ruled out immediately. And although there is a real resonance with the playful juxtaposition of courtly love, humor, and childlike innocence that so dominates the Obilot episode (including the gift of a ring) in Wolfram's *Parzival*, social class plays no role; Gawan and Obilot are both of the nobility. I am in no way presuming anachronistic influence here. But Hartmann could have been familiar with similar tales within the cycle of Gawan episodes in Arthurian literature.

³⁴ Jacobus and Ryan, *The Golden Legend*, 101–04; here 102.

suitor also explains the narrator's frequent asides meant to reassure the audience of the Meier's daughter's virtue, despite her lowly station. No fewer than five separate references stress her tender age, goodness and innocence.³⁵

The Meier's daughter hears by accident of Heinrich's fate and the possibility of a cure on earth. Three years have passed. She is now mature enough to marry ("vollen manbaere," 447), as the sacrifice demands. Her compassion erupts in the form of silently violent weeping. Her tears flow so strongly that they drench the feet of her parents, at the foot of whose bed she is sleeping, and awaken them. The association of tears, compassion, and feet would have signaled a spiritual potential beyond goodness to almost any medieval audience. They would have thought of Mary Magdalene, who according to medieval exegetes was the woman who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears and dried them with her hair. Magdalene was for the Middle Ages the ultimate penitent saint, whose spiritual journey brought her from whore and outcast to becoming the disciple of the disciples.³⁶ Her legend, with which the audience would have been familiar, tells of her long life after the crucifixion, which includes miraculous acts of healing and divinely inspired preaching. No other legend so embodies the power of sainthood to raise one above the restrictions of gender, wealth, and social class. And among the most convincing evidence of saintliness is the willingness to sacrifice oneself for others and the ability to make miraculous cures possible. The peasant girl's tears are another powerful signal to the audience that it needs to see her as a potential saint.

Lest the audience miss such a clear signal, the narrator addresses directly the possibility of saintliness in several commentaries. The narrator initially marvels at the girl's presence in the company of a leper (He seemed to her to be free of sin and healthy. However much the playthings that he had given her might have moved her, she was motivated above all by the gift God had given her: a good heart [344–48]).³⁷ He describes the Meier's daughter's seated position with Heinrich's feet in her lap in terms that compare her to the angels (For the sweet little thing had the feet of her dear lord in her lap. One could easily compare her childlike devotion to the goodness of the angels [461–66]).³⁸ When she bathes her

³⁵ She is one of many "schoeniu kint" (beautiful children, 299), but her ability to "rehte güetlichen gebären" (to conduct herself with proper bearing, 304–05) distinguishes her from the others. She attends to him "mit ir güetlichen pflege" (with good-hearted service, 310). She is "sin kurzwile gar" (even a means of innocent pleasure, 320), both for her "genaeme" (pleasant demeanor) and for the "rainer Kindes güete" (pure goodness of a child, 322) with which she devotes herself to Heinrich.

³⁶ See "Beata Peccatrix" in Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), 131–88. Especially useful for the reception of Mary Magdalene in the German Middle Ages is Madeleine Boxler, "'ich bin ein predigerin und appostlorin': die deutschen Maria Magdalena-Legenden des Mittelalters (1300–1550): Untersuchungen und Texte. Deutsche Literatur von den Anfängen bis 1700, 22 (Bern and New York: Lang, 1996).

³⁷ "er dühte sie viel reine. swie starke ir daz geriete diu kindische miete, iedoch geliebete irz aller meist von gotes gebe ein süezer geist" (344–48).

³⁸ "Wan ez hete diu vil süeze ir lieben herren vüeze stände in ir schozen. man möhte wol genözen ir

parents' feet in tears, the narrator calls it an example of the greatest compassion that he had ever heard displayed by a child (She prepared again a bath with her crying eyes, for she bore hidden in her feelings the highest degree of goodness that I have ever heard a child to possess [518–23]).³⁹

The centerpiece of Hartmann's didactic tale is the dispute between her and her parents in response to the announcement that she plans to sacrifice herself for Heinrich (550–1010). The parents' arguments, such as that she is just a child (573–75), she does not realize how terrible death is (578–584), she should obey the 4th Commandment (640–46), or that suicide will consign her to eternal damnation (658–62) are predicated on the assumption that their daughter is a normal child. In this sense Classen is justified in reading the words of the mother as an expression of maternal love (See Introduction). The daughter's lengthy and eloquent response combines a strong dose of *contemptu mundi* ("Life brings nothing but toil and suffering" [601–04])⁴⁰; "our youth and life are nothing more than ashes and dust" (722–23)⁴¹, and "marriage is hell on earth" (765–72)⁴² with spiritual fervor (If she gives herself to God early, then she shall escape the threat of the devil [684–90])⁴³; she is giving freely giving up her worldly life for eternal life (606–10).⁴⁴ Such lofty aspirations are not only incongruous in the mouth of an eleven-year-old peasant girl, they also appear to invoke the selflessness of sainthood. And since one of the typical early signs of sainthood is the rebellion against parental authority in favor of total devotion to God, the audience would certainly have continued to weigh the possibility that the girl's motives were truly divinely inspired. The girl's mastery of rhetoric would have called yet another parallel to the audience's mind: St. Catherine of Alexandria's dispute with the fifty philosophers assembled by Prince Maxentius, where she puts all of their erudition to shame. The wisest sage replies, "You must know, Caesar, that no one has ever been able to stand up to us and not be put down forthwith; but this young woman, in whom the spirit of God speaks, has answered us so admirably that either we do not know what to say against Christ, or else we fear to say anything at all."⁴⁵

kintlich gemüete hin zuo der engel güete" (461–66).

³⁹ "Si bereite aber ein bat mit weinenden ougen: wan sî truoc also tougen nâhen in ir gemüete die aller meiste güete, die ich von kinde ie vernam. Welch kint getete och ie alsam" (518–23)?

⁴⁰ "Wanswenne er hie geringet und ûf sîn alter bringet den lîp mit micheler nôt, sô muoz er liden doch den töt" (601–04).

⁴¹ "unser leben und unser jugent ist ein nebel und ein stoup" (722–23).

⁴² "wirt er mir liep, daz ist ein not: wirt er mir leit, daz ist der tot. Sô hân ich iemer leit und bin mit ganzer arbeit gescheiden von gemache mit meniger hande sache diu den wîben wirret und si an vreuden irret" (765–72).

⁴³ "sô lâtz an iuwern hulden stân daz ich ouch diu beide von dem tiuvel scheide und mich gote müeze geben. jâ ist dirre werlte leben niuwan der sele verlust" (684–89).

⁴⁴ "Ez ist mir komen ûf daz zil, des ich got iemer loben wil, daz ich den jungen lîp mac geben umbe daz ewige leben" (606–10).

⁴⁵ See Jacobus and Ryan, *The Golden Legend*, Vol. 2, 334–41; here 336. Although Catherine was "well

The impassioned plea of the Meier's daughter reaches its climax when she contrasts the hell on earth of marriage with the heavenly liaison promised her by Christ, whom she depicts as a free peasant bridegroom whose fields are in perpetual blossom. The Meier's daughter's eloquent description would be in itself compelling evidence of spiritual inspiration. Her evocation of the Peasant Bridegroom provides an even clearer sign to the medieval audience that the question of her sainthood stands at center stage. Anyone familiar with saints' lives would have recognized how much the peasant girl's words mirror the response of St. Agnes to the gifts and proposal of the precept's son.⁴⁶ And it is certainly no accident that Agnes' vita begins with the "quasi senex" topos ("Childhood is computed in years, but in her immense wisdom she was old; she was a child in body but already aged in spirit.")⁴⁷ After telling the prefect's son that she is already pledged to another, Agnes commends this mystery lover for nobility of lineage, beauty of person, abundance of wealth, courage, the power to achieve, and love transcendent. "The one I love is far nobler than you, of more eminent angels; the sun and the moon wonder at his beauty; his wealth never lacks or lessens, his perfume brings the dead to life, his touch strengthens the feeble, his love is chastity itself, his touch holiness, union with him, virginity."⁴⁸ The peasant girl's description is not as overtly allegorical because it is meant to contrast the joys of heaven with the miseries of life on earth, but both she and Agnes stress the enduring power of the divine. The Meier's daughter's peasant bridegroom is free, that is, he is under feudal obligation to no one like Heinrich, something that defines the precariousness of even a wealthy peasant such as that of the Meier

educated in the liberal disciplines" (335), nothing in her training should have enabled her to best the wisest philosophers of the empire. Hence the power relationship "young girl-philosopher" corresponds to Hartmann's "young girl-parent."

⁴⁶ Robert Mills offers an interesting reading of many of the motifs under discussion here in Robert Mills, "Can the Virgin Martyr Speak?," *Medieval virginites*, ed. Ruth Evans, Sarah Salih, and Anke Bernau, *Religion & Culture in the Middle Ages* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 187–215; here 189–95. See also Alexander Joseph Denomy, *The Old French Lives of Saint Agnes and Other Vernacular Versions of the Middle Ages*. Harvard Studies in Romance Languages, XIII (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938).

⁴⁷ Jacobus and Ryan, *The Golden Legend*, 102.

⁴⁸ Ibid.: "'Is there anyone whose ancestry is more exalted, whose powers are more invincible, whose aspect is more beautiful, whose love more delightful, who is richer in every grace? Then she enumerated five benefits that her spouse had conferred on her and confers on all his other spouses: he gives them a ring as an earnest of his fidelity, he clothes and adorns them with a multitude of virtues, he signs them with the blood of his passion and death, he binds them to himself with the bond of his love, and, and endows them with the treasures of eternal glory. 'He has placed a wedding ring on my right hand,' she said, 'and a necklace of precious stones around my neck, gowned me with a robe woven with gold and jewels, placed a mark on my forehead to keep me from taking any lover but himself, and his blood has tinted my cheeks. Already his chaste embraces hold me close, he has united his body to mine, and he has shown me incomparable treasures, and promised to give them to me if I remain true to him.'"

must live. His plough, she asserts, brings prosperity (779). Neither do animals die nor children cry (780). His holdings are never touched by frost, no one goes hungry, there is no suffering and no illness. (783–86).⁴⁹ Through the bridegroom reference, Hartmann is able to evoke the legend of Agnes and thereby forge an explicit link to the potential of mystical experience within the Meier's daughter's striving.⁵⁰

The peasant girl's parents now face an agonizing decision. Is their daughter truly saintly with the potential to become a virgin martyr or is she merely a foolish young girl who should be thoroughly beaten and sent back to work? In their search for an answer they look to the same sources that Hartmann's narrator has been invoking all along: the lives of the saints.

When they saw their child approach Death in such a fashion, and when she spoke with such wisdom and acted in violation of human nature, they began to consider among themselves the fact that the tongue of a mere child could never utter such wisdom and such sense. They came to believe that the Holy Spirit had infused her with the words, the same power who worked such wonders in St. Nicholas when he was still in the cradle and inspired him to turn his childlike faculties in the direction of God. (855–75)⁵¹

For her parents the key factors are her willingness to die, the wisdom of her arguments, and the fact that her desires run contrary to human nature.⁵² The decisive evidence is the wisdom and sense of her arguments, and the saintly

⁴⁹ "im gât sîn pluoc harte wol, sîn hof ist alles râtes vol, da enstirbet ros noch daz rint, da enmüent diu weinenden kint, da enist ze heiz noch ze kalt, da enwirt von jâren nieman alt (der alte wirt junger), da enist deheiner slahte leit, da ist ganziu vreude âne arbeit" (779–88).

⁵⁰ Despite all of the references to the potential of sainthood just noted, Hartmann is careful to include some signs that would support the audience's doubt. The dynamic flow of the peasant maiden's rhetoric begins with her determination to sacrifice herself for Heinrich and, given his healing, for her parents. Yet it makes her fate on earth into its chief concern until the bridegroom-soliloquy stresses the depravity and spiritual dangers posed by life more than the glory of the Bridegroom, as is the case in Agnes' *vita*. The girl's concluding words even propose a limit to selflessness, something no saint would ever countenance: "Whoever provides so much happiness to another such that he himself becomes unhappy, and whoever elevates another such that he humiliates himself, he is wearing too much the yoke of fidelity" / "swer den andern vreuwet so, daz er selbe wirt unfrô, und swer den andern kroenet und sich selben hoenet, der triuwen sî joch ze vil" (823–27).

⁵¹ "Do sî daz kint sâhen zem tôde also gâhen, und ez so wîslichen sprach unde menschlich reht zerbrach, sî begunden ahten under in, daz die wîsheit und den sîn niemer erzeigen kunde dehein zunge in Kindes munde. sî jâhen, daz der heilic geist der rede waere ir volleist, der ouch sant Niklauses pflac, dô er in der wagen lac, und in die wîsheit lerte, daz er ze goten kerte sîne kintliche gûete" (855–75).

⁵² Lexer, *Handwörterbuch*, 377. Lexer defines "reht" as "die Gesamtheit der rechtlichen Verhältnisse jemand's, was man zu fordern und zu leisten hat." Examples: "kristenlichez reht" is the sacrament, "geistliches reht" is investiture, "menschlichez reht begehen" is a synonym for suicide, and "weibliches reht" is menstruation. The word field seems to indicate that the qualities the parents have in mind are god-given as a part of nature.

exemplar is St. Nicholas. Convinced, the parents tell Heinrich of the girl's resolve and give him their permission. Persuaded by the parents' support, Heinrich finally agrees to go through with the sacrifice. One last signal resounds in tears and wailing; as many commentators have noted, Heinrich, the parents and the girl all weep for different reasons, but the Meier's daughter's motivation is the only one that could in any way be termed selfless: She weeps out of fear that Heinrich will not go through with it.

The peasant girl's conduct at the doctor's office in Salerno, where the sacrifice should take place, evokes further parallels with the Virgin Martyrs. Convinced that Heinrich has intimidated the girl into acquiescence, the Master attempts to dissuade her by graphically describing what brutality awaits her. He first will strip her naked, an act of humiliation that in and of itself will ruin any aspirations of marriage. He then will tie her hands and feet, making it impossible for her to resist. And then he will cut into her living body and remove her beating heart. But the sternest test of all will be spiritual. If her resolve wavers for just an instant, the cure will cease to work and all of her suffering will be for naught. The girl's response betrays verbal aggression reminiscent of St. Agnes and St. Agatha.⁵³ She admits to having second thoughts, but only about the courage of the Master: She taunts him: Is he up to the deed, or is he too much of a coward? She tells him laughingly that she cannot wait, and that she is approaching the sacrifice as though she were going to a dance. As St. Agatha is being stretched on the rack, she says to Quintianus, "These pains are my delight! It's as if I were hearing some good news, or seeing someone I had long wished to see, or had found a great treasure."⁵⁴ Chastened, the Master locks the door.

In a final fearless act, the girl does not wait to be stripped, but rips off her clothes and stands with no shame before the doctor. He then binds her to the table, and whets his knife in preparation for the sacrifice. Martha Easton has advanced the possibility that the act of stripping the martyr creates "the elision of gender" in the spiritual sense. "A naked martyr. . . suggests a rebirth in to a state of grace in which gender is transcended."⁵⁵ Nakedness in this context also could signify a kind of baptism, a "stripping away of the cares of the material world and a return

⁵³ Gerhard Eis, "Salernitarisches und Unsalernitarisches im 'Armen Heinrich' des Hartmann von Aue," *Forschungen und Fortschritte* 31 (1957): 77–81, argues against earlier interpretations that saw precise parallels between the peasant daughter's behavior and that of the martyrs. But enough of a suggestion is there to leave the question open to the audience's speculation.

⁵⁴ Jacobus and Ryan, *The Golden Legend*, 154–57; here 155. See also the words of St. Agnes, "I will not sacrifice to your gods, and no one can sully my virtue because I have with me a guardian of my body, an angel of the Lord" (Jacobus and Ryan, *The Golden Legend*, 101–04; here 103).

⁵⁵ Martha Easton, "Pain, torture and death in the Huntington Library *Legenda aurea*," *Gender and Holiness Men, Women, and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. Samantha Riches and Sarah Salih (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 49–64; here 53.

to innocence.”⁵⁶ And this connection to baptism, in turn, would signal the unification of opposites. If the audience had read the maiden’s aggressive act in these terms, then the maiden’s act would signify the acceptance of the virgin martyr’s fate, “to be stripped, baptized in blood and clothed in the glory of heaven.”⁵⁷

Once the Meier’s daughter is bound and helpless, the moment of truth and transition is at hand. Heinrich, who has been waiting in the other room, wishes to see her one last time. He peeks through a hole in the wall and spies her naked, bound, and helpless. The sight of her inspires Heinrich to turn his life around completely.⁵⁸ Heinrich’s new kind of goodness involves living in imitation of Job: “One should accept everything that God imposes.”⁵⁹ When Heinrich stops the sacrifice, the girl’s steadfast defiance and verbal aggression so suggestive of a virgin martyr is transformed by a total reversal of roles, signaled by the narrator’s words, she breaks “every rule of behavior and conduct.” The Meier’s daughter labels her lord a coward and berates him for lacking the courage to do what she was ready to do. She tears her hair and yammers bitterly for death. In a chiasmic moment the knight has learned to accept his fate even as the potential martyr refuses to accept hers, dissolving into self-pity and despair.

At this point God intervenes and brings healing to both sufferers.

Then the Diviner of Hearts (*cordis speculator*), to whom the gate of every single heart is open, recognized her constancy and her suffering. After he had shown them the honor of putting them to such a rigorous test, just as he had the rich man Job, the holy Christ now showed how much he values constancy and compassion for others and delivered them from all of their suffering. He made Heinrich healthy again.⁶⁰

Noteworthy here is the fact that the Meier’s daughter is mentioned first at this moment of redemption, with her constancy (“*triuwe*”) and suffering (“*not*”) cited as the reasons for the imposition of God’s grace. Here, too, we find the most powerful argument in favor of reading Hartmann’s tale as two parallel figures in

⁵⁶ Ibid., 53.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Every commentator who has written on this story has attempted to supply the missing motives here for Heinrich’s change of heart. For helpful discussions of the dualistic and gradualistic positions, see Cormeau and Störmer, *Epoche*, 156–57; Hasty, *Adventures*, 75–77; Eva-Maria Carne, *Die Frauengestalten bei Hartmann von Aue: Ihre Bedeutung im Aufbau und Gehalt der Epen*. Marburger Beiträge zur Germanistik, 31 (Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1970), 53–55; and most recently, Classen, “Herz und Seele,” 10–12.

⁵⁹ “swaz dir got hat beschert, daz lâ allez geschehen” (1254–55).

⁶⁰ “dô erkande ir triuwe und ir nôt cordis speculator, vor dem deheines herzen tor vürnames niht beslozen ist. sît er durch sînen süezen list an in beiden des geruochte, daz er si versuochte reht also volleclichen sam Jôben den richen, do erzeigte der heilic Krist, wie liep im triuwe und bârnde ist, und schiet sî dô beide von allem ir leide und machete in da zestund reine unde wol gesunt” (1356–70).

quest of redemption. When God heals the maiden of her despair, He also heals Heinrich of his leprosy. Thus the despair that had so marred her beauty and the awful disease that so marred Heinrich's inner transformation vanish through God's grace. Both are healed, physically and spiritually. Their historically impossible marriage can be read as the worldly expression of their spiritual equality. The question of the Meier's daughter's sainthood has been answered. At stake was not a chance for total sacrifice or martyrdom, as the girl had believed, but rather the gift of suffering as a test of goodness and patience. The true exemplar for both Heinrich and the Meier's daughter turns out to be Job, not Nicholas. The virtue to be tested is not otherworldly goodness but rather the patience of a sufferer who has been plunged into the dark night of the soul.

III. Conclusion

This intertextual exploration of Hartmann's tale has unearthed incontrovertible evidence for the existence of a "concept of childhood" in vernacular courtly literature of the twelfth century. The Meier's daughter's interactions with the knight Heinrich and the parents' response to her desire to sacrifice herself would not have made sense to the audience unless measured against a clearly-understood expectations of how children behaved. Even when one factors in the possibility that hagiography, tales of the holy family, or legends supplied the plot material for Hartmann's story, the following assumptions regarding notions of childhood retain their validity. A stage in life is depicted before which marriage, or in this case, marriage-related sacrifice is possible. Judging from the peasant girl's interaction with Heinrich and with her family, a "normal" child of wealthy peasants would be expected to work on her parents' land, obeying them in everything until such a time as when she would be married to a man of equal station, a man whom the parents would choose. She would then live under the authority of this man, submitting to him in everything and risking her life in childbirth every year, with the family's existence under constant threat from natural catastrophes or changes in the feudal structure.

Into this scenario Hartmann introduces the medieval notion of divine intervention in the form of saintliness. Just as medieval audiences were intrigued by stories of Jesus' childhood, in which the father Joseph must deal with an omnipotent son, so does Hartmann play with the narrative possibilities of peasant parents confronting their seemingly saintly daughter. Normal children would shun a leper; she spends every possible minute in the leper's company. Normal peasants do not consort with the nobility; she is Heinrich's sole companion and source of happiness. The elaborate stages of courtship, meant to transpire between noble knights and ladies in courtly settings of fortress or palace, take place in Hart-

mann's tale on a remote clearing, with a peasant girl child playing the role of Heinrich's bride. In these initial displacements arises the principal riddle that underlies the rest of the story: Will the peasant girl-child develop into a peasant's wife like her mother or into a virgin martyr? The audience encounters her as a child and follows her fate into adolescence. Just as in the apocryphal tales of the holy family, where we see Jesus the helpful toddler develop into the angry adolescent who instructs the rabbis and chases the moneychangers from the temple, so, too, does the Meier's daughter have the potential to develop from the devoted handmaiden of a leper into the virgin martyr.

Although he equips the maiden with the compassion of Magdalene, the wisdom and eloquence of Catherine and Nicholas, the defiance and verbal aggression of Agatha, the fervent desire for Christ the bridegroom of Agnes, and the helpless nakedness of Catherine and Margaret, Hartmann transforms the peasant girl's situation to fit the medieval context. In the place of the pagan suitor stands Heinrich the sinful leper. The absolute dichotomy between noble and peasant replaces that of pagan and Christian. The daunting test of faith contained in the doctor's cure has replaced the threat of torture and execution. Although martyrdom as defined by the church was no longer officially acknowledged, martyrs in the medieval sense were depicted either as victims of heretics⁶¹ or as those who are willing to accept death even if given foreknowledge of it, as is the case of Meinrad.⁶² Since the heretic motif did not fit his plot, Hartmann chose foreknowledge of death, in this case, in the form of willing sacrifice in order to establish the girl's potential for martyrdom. When the girl's helpless nakedness, in the context of virgin martyrdom a sign of transcendence, both of sex and of gender, inspires Heinrich's inner transformation and stops the sacrifice, this is a final obeisance to the ability of saintliness to enlighten and convert the sinful. And for the Middle Ages this saintliness could reside as easily in the body of a bound eleven-year-old as in the stately bearing of a bishop.

Even as we accept the paradigm shift in our understanding of medieval childhood, as it has been documented in this volume, the concept of childhood that emerges from Hartmann's tale as read through hagiography still differs in significant ways from that of modernity. The potential for divine intervention in every dimension of medieval life meant that an audience's grasp of binaries such as parent/child, noble/peasant, wise/foolish had to be much more fluid and dynamic. Whereas all facets of medieval life were organized into categories according to strict hierarchies, the possibility for reversal and transformation through divine power could never be completely eliminated. In such contexts, categories that define childhood and childlike behavior are transformed from static

⁶¹ Goodich, *Vita perfecta*, 190–93.

⁶² Klaus Klein, "Meinrad," *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon*, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. 2., völlig neubearb. Aufl. (Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 1987), Vol. 6, 319–22.

taxonomies into dynamic processes that required investigation and demanded miraculous confirmation. The basis for such a process, as depicted in *Der arme Heinrich*, rests in Hartmann's clear depiction of both the physical and the affective dimensions of childhood in a context that reflects, at least in some sense, the economic and social conditions of his time.

Carol Dover

(Georgetown University)

Childhood and Family Relations in the Old French Prose *Lancelot*

The best-known reference to the anonymous thirteenth-century French prose *Lancelot* (composed 1215–1220) is probably the scene in Dante's *Inferno* where the pilgrim meets the shades of Francesca and Paolo, the pair of lovers consigned by the author to perpetual imprisonment in the second circle of Hell. Francesca's shade recalls how she and Paolo had been reading of Lancelot's love for Guinevere; when they reached the point where the lovers kiss, Paolo kissed her. The lovers confused the book's mimetic reality with their own, seeing themselves as a latter-day Lancelot and Guinevere, and their own love as a many-splendored thing worthy of Arthurian literature's most devoted earthly lover, but in real life Paolo and Francesca's first kiss was literally fatal. It ensured that they would be forever joined in love and sorrow in *Inferno*. Francesca blames the book itself, accusing it of being a go-between that moved their love from the realm of feelings to the realm of action, and adultery. But if they read this far, they must also have read the book's narrative of Lancelot's childhood, which speaks of love with just as much mimetic reality.¹ What might they have learned about childhood love from this?

Childhood is conspicuous by its absence in French Arthurian chivalric verse romances of the twelfth- and early-thirteenth centuries, which usually portray adult relationships in which love for a lady is shown to be the motivating force for chivalry and honor. Hence, they focus on full-grown knights who leave no hint of how they came to acquire the personalities they have or who their mothers are (or were).² One notable exception to this pattern is Chrétien de Troyes' Perceval figure

¹ For extensive studies on the metaphorical significance of reading in the Middle Ages, see *The Book and the Magic of Reading in the Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen. Garland Medieval Bibliographies, 24 (New York and London: Garland, 1999).

² Tristan and Chrétien's Perceval are two notable exceptions, but are largely outside the scope of this essay. On childhood in Arthurian romance, see Madeleine P. Cosman, *The Education of the Hero in Arthurian Romance* (Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina University Press, 1966).

whose widowed mother purposely keeps him from all knowledge of knighthood, with the consequences that we know—and others that we cannot know because of the unfinished state of the romance.³ The *Lancelot* author clearly believed that childhood and adulthood were closely linked, for he recycled Chrétien's Lancelot figure and created for this hero a romance biography stretching from infancy to manhood.⁴ This is the time span that corresponds to the conceptual frame of the Old French term "enfances" (childhood), the period that ended for the male child when he assumed life-defining responsibilities such as marriage, the conquest of a fief, or the management of an inheritance, regardless of his age.⁵ The prose *Lancelot* biography includes an extensive narrative of Lancelot's upbringing that ends when he leaves home at age 18 to seek his fortune in the world. This is the period that I will refer to as his "childhood" in this essay.⁶

One thing is certain: the childhood education in *Lancelot* debunks Philippe Aries' notion that the sentiment of childhood did not exist in the Middle Ages.⁷ Had Aries read the beginning of the French prose *Lancelot*, he would never have claimed that, in Albrecht Classen's words, "medieval people lacked a clear understanding of childhood and did not have the same emotional bond with their

³ Among the voluminous bibliography on the *Conte du Graal*, see especially Matilda T. Bruckner, "Rewriting Chrétien's *Conte du grail*—Mothers and Sons: Questions, Contradictions, and Connections," *The Medieval Opus. Imitation, Rewriting, and Transmission in the French Tradition*. Proceedings of the Symposium Held at the Institute for Research in the Humanities, October 5–7 1995, University of Wisconsin-Madison, ed. Douglas Kelly (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Editions Rodopi 1997), 213–44. Also Deborah B. Schwartz, "'A la guise de Gales l'atorna': Maternal Influence in Chrétien's *Conte du Graal*," *Essays in Medieval Studies* 12 (1995), ed. Nicole Clifton (online version: <http://www.luc.edu/publications/medieval/vol12/schwartz.html> [last accessed on March 14, 2005]).

⁴ The text is available in two modern critical editions. *Lancelot: roman en prose du XIIIe siècle*, ed. Alexandre Micha, 9 vols. Textes Littéraires Français (Paris and Geneva: Droz, 1979–1983), covers the biography of Lancelot up to the birth of his son Galahad. *Lancelot do Lac. The non-cyclic Old French Prose Romance*, ed. Elspeth Kennedy, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980) is a much shorter version that ends at the point where Lancelot has become the queen's lover and is made a knight of Arthur's household. Kennedy believes that this represents an earlier state of the romance, before it was earmarked for development into the much larger cyclic version published by Micha. The child-rearing narrative is in *Lancelot do Lac*, vol. 1 (volume 2 contains the variants, critical notes, and glossary), and *Lancelot*, vol. 7. In this essay all references are to Kennedy's edition (K) and consist of page numbers in the first volume. Translations are from *Lancelot-Grail: The Vulgate Cycle in Translation*, general editor Norris J. Lacy (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1993–1999), vol. 2, with occasional amendments of my own.

⁵ The prose biography is continued into middle age by the *Queste del Saint Graal* and into old age and death by the *Mort le roi Artu*.

⁶ For a parallel study of the Middle High German *Prosalancelot*, see Albrecht Classen, "Die vermeintlich vergessenen Kinder in der mhd. Literatur. Emotionsgeschichtliche Erkundigungen," *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* forthcoming.

⁷ *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Plon, 1960), 134: "le sentiment de l'enfance n'existait pas."

children as modern parents.”⁸ The *Lancelot* childhood is narrated at length and with sufficient detail to give the modern reader the impression that it is a consciously formulated childhood education worthy of a modern textbook on child-rearing.

One might object, of course, that the education narrative is a document of pure fantasy because the child is raised by a fairy in a “supernatural” environment. On the other hand, one might argue that the detailed nature of the child’s education is evidence of a profound knowledge of child-rearing, which must have been part of the author’s cultural knowledge base.⁹ Shulamith Shahar tacitly acknowledges this apparent contradiction when she observes that Lancelot’s education “is based on feudal reality and pedagogical practice of the time” but “the author’s main deviation from reality appears to be in the description of the boy’s close ties with this adoptive mother up to manhood.”¹⁰ It is worth remembering that literature is composed for a specific audience and caters for the common values that author, audience, and text share. Jean Flori has pointed out that medieval literature offers the historian the most faithful account of the ideals of chivalry, because it holds up to its chivalric audience its own self-image for contemplation.¹¹ I would add to this that literature provides an essential affectivity that strictly historical documents (charters, records of births, deaths, and marriages, registers, population counts, etc) cannot provide.¹² Just how much would we understand of our own times, our culture, and ourselves, if we were obliged to see them devoid of the beliefs, feelings, and sensibility that animated – and in many instances justified – them?

Recognizing, then, that medieval literature reflects reality indirectly, in the manner of a prism, let me pose the question that underlies Lancelot’s education: how does a mother raise a male child for Arthurian chivalry in a world where Arthurian chivalry has lost its direction and its effectiveness? This is the perspective from which I explore the dynamics of the relationship between the child Lancelot and his adoptive mother.

⁸ In his excellent introduction to the present volume, 10.

⁹ James A. Schultz makes this distinction in relation to German childhood narratives, in chapter 1 of his book *The Knowledge of Childhood in the German Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995). There is also the issue of intertextual information from other romances, which I deal with elsewhere.

¹⁰ Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, trans. Chaya Galai (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 220.

¹¹ Jean Flori, *Chevaliers et Chevalerie au Moyen Age*. La Vie Quotidienne (Paris: Hachette, 1998), 236.

¹² *Codierungen von Emotionen im Mittelalter*, ed. C. Stephen Jaeger, Ingrid Kasten, Hendrikje Haufe, and Andrea Sieber. Trends in Medieval Philology, 1 (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2003); see also the discussion of this aspect in Albrecht Classen’s introduction to this volume.

Family Relationships

Lancelot's family relationships make him the long-awaited son, born late in life, to the ageing king Ban of Benoyc and his beautiful young wife, Queen Helaine. The king was known for his chivalry in his younger days and it is suggested that the queen, who is known for her goodness, comes from a hallowed bloodline. The child's mother left the infant alone in his basket on the ground while she looked for her ailing husband. She returns to see, "une demoiselle qui le tenoit tout nu en son giron et l'estraint et serre moult durement entre ses mameles et li baise les iex et la bouce menuement; et ele n'avoit mie tort car che estoit li plus biaux enfes de tout le monde" (K15; a damsel who was holding him naked in her lap, hugging him, pressing him gently to her breast and placing little kisses on his eyes and mouth; and she was not mistaken, for he was the most beautiful child in all the world). The mother tells the damsel to leave the child because he has lost his father, his lands, and his prospects are reduced to hardship, sorrow, and no joy. In short, he is not worth kidnapping. The damsel simply jumps feet first into the nearby lake with the child in her arms, leaving us wondering whether this is a case of kidnapping or rescue. The grieving mother has lost her only child, her grief knows no bounds, and she finds refuge in an abbey where she takes the veil.¹³ Hence, the child is raised from infancy by the mysterious damsel, who educates him in her marvelous realm until he is ready for knighthood in the outside world.

The narrator subsequently refocuses attention on the damsel, informing us that she was a fairy,¹⁴ and explains his terms:

A celui tens estoient apelees fees totes iceles qui savoient d'enchantement et de charaies, et mout en estoit en celui termine en la Grant Bretagne plus que en autres terres. Eles savoient, ce dit li contes des brettes estoires, la force des paroles et des pierres et des herbes, par quoi eles estoient tenues en joveneté et en biauté et en si granz richeces com eles devoisoient. Et tot fu establi au tans Merlin, la prophete as Anglois, qui sot la [sa]pience que des deiabes puet descendre. [K21]

[At that time, fairies were so called because they knew about enchantment and charms, and there were many more of them in Great Britain at that time than in other lands. According to the tale in the British/Breton histories, they knew about enchantment and

¹³ Queen Helaine's sister, Evaine, is obliged to flee and leave her two infant sons. The sisters are both given refuge in the same abbey, where they talk together about their love for their children.

¹⁴ On fairies see Laurence Harf-Lancner, *Les fées au Moyen Age: Morgane et Melusine. La naissance des fées*, (Geneva: Slatkine, 1984); Katharine M. Briggs, *The Fairies in Tradition and Literature* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1967; Helaine Newstead, "The Traditional Background of Partenopecu de Blois," *PMLA* 61 (1946): 916–46; Lucy Paton, *The Fairy Mythology of Arthurian Romance* (Boston, MA: Atheneum, 1903); see also Leslie Ellen Jones, "Fairies," *Medieval Folklore: An Encyclopedia of Myths, Legends, Tales, Beliefs, and Customs*, ed. Carl Lindahl, John McNamara, John Lindow. Vol. 1 (Santa Barbara, Denver, and Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2000), 298–303

spells, the power of words and stones and herbs, which kept them eternally youthful and beautiful and as wealthy as they wished. And all this was set up in the time of Merlin, the English prophet, who possessed all the knowledge that can come down from devils.]

This is unusual precision concerning a Breton romance fairy, who traditionally arrives unsummoned in all her beauty to rescue a knight in distress. We learn that in her maiden youth this fairy was called Ninienne/Vivienne. Merlin fell in love with her, but she resisted his amorous advances, persuaded him to teach her some of his knowledge, and used it to remove him from circulation, effectively putting an end to his power that, incidentally, had brought Arthur to the throne. Clearly, she knows the ways of men, but the *Lancelot's* narrator carefully dissociates his fairy from any erotic interest by associating her with antiquity's goddess Diana, the virgin huntress who killed any man who dared to look upon her with desire. When she becomes Lancelot's foster mother, she has already used her new merlinesque power to acquire the trappings of wealth, as her new name indicates: she is the Dame du Lac (Lady of the Lake). The author preserves the romance mystery surrounding her, for we never know exactly how much she knows, and she is unknown to Arthur and his court, but the narrator describes her as "sage et courtoise" (K23; courtly and knowledgeable about love), attributes that must surely qualify her to prepare a child for courtly life.

The narrator minimizes her supernatural trappings. Her lake is nothing more than a *semblance* (illusion): although the water of a deep lake appeared to cover her realm, it was really a natural phenomenon which we would explain today as impenetrable mist that successfully concealed her numerous houses from view and thereby made the domain inaccessible. Who could envisage a more watertight isolation from the world outside? This is the advantage of the lake: just as it conceals the fairy, her identity, and her riches from view, so it also hides the child from the strife and pain and sorrow in the outside world. As Laurence Harf-Lancner explains, Lancelot's immersion in the lake marks the re-birth of the hero, with a second mother, and the narrative pattern is that of the child of illustrious parentage taken at birth and raised by a supernatural being in a mysterious domain.¹⁵

The education of a male child destined for knighthood followed a pattern that was already well established in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.¹⁶ Until the age of 7 or 10 (the first stage of childhood), he was entrusted to the care of women, whose task was to ensure that he survived and that his noble nature was nurtured gently so as not to be deformed, in keeping with his noble parentage. By the age of 7 or 10, when the second stage of childhood began, he

¹⁵ "Lancelot et la Dame du Lac", *Romania* 105 (1984): 16–33; here 27–28.

¹⁶ See Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* ch. 10.

would leave home to serve his apprenticeship as a page at the court of a lord, under the guidance of a tutor (usually a knight) whose task was to teach him knightly conduct. This second stage, which covered the onset of puberty, was defined as "the age of discretion" because it was the time when a noble son learned through education to choose good over evil in the course of his professional training in the company of adult knights.¹⁷ It ended between the ages of 15 and 18, when he was considered ready for knighting. However, not all sons left home for training; the only son of a very powerful lord, for example, would serve instead at his father's court under the direction of a male tutor, and this was considered the most satisfactory option for the training of a son who would one day assume the father's position and power.¹⁸ Much of what Lancelot does is indeed standard for a lay child destined for knighthood, and in this respect the child-rearing conforms to educational practice. Does Lancelot's education deviate from this pattern? What does the Lady of the Lake add to or subtract from the norm? How can we interpret the deviations?

Educating the Child

Lancelot's nurturing has brought a new set of family relationships. Since he has lost his father as well as his biological mother, the fairy replaces both parents, but she is not alone, for she is aided by her damsels, the marvelous resources of her realm, and her mysterious knowledge. Any fears we may have had about his mysterious new environment are unfounded, for he thrives in the care of the fairy:

il ne fait pas a demander se ele lo tint chier, car ele lo gardoit plus doucement que nule autre fame ne poist faire qui porté ne l'aüst dedanz son cors. . . . Ensi fu trois anz Lanceloz an la garde a la damoisele a trop grant aise, et bien cuidoit por voir que ele fust sa mere. Si fu plus creüz en ces trois anz c'onques autres ne fist en cinq, et fu de totes choses si biax anfes que plus biau ne deüst nus deviser. [K24]

[It goes without saying that she cherished him, for she took care of him more tenderly than any woman could who had not carried him in her belly. . . . Thus Lancelot stayed in the care of the damsel for three years in great comfort, truly believing she was his mother. He grew more in three years than any child would have in five years, and he was in every way such a beautiful child that no one could have described a more beautiful one.]

¹⁷ Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, 24, referring to Philippe de Novare's *Les Quatre Ages de l'Homme*

¹⁸ Schultz, *The Knowledge of Childhood* 75.

The child has survived the crucial period between birth and two and a half years when medieval children were at greatest risk of dying.¹⁹ Queen Helaine's assessment of her son's prospects—hardship, suffering, and no joy—appears to have been reversed. Love between infant and nurturer was recognized in medieval times as an indispensable element of the infant's wellbeing, for it produced joy, without which the child risked becoming melancholy, and a melancholy child would become an insecure, mean-spirited adult—quite the antithesis of the noble ethos.²⁰ "With nurturing comes love," as Shahar so aptly puts it.²¹ Lancelot is clearly benefiting from his environment.

The fact that Lancelot is a foster child, a foundling, means that he does not know who he is. The Lady of the Lake knows his name, but she keeps it a secret from all at the lake. He does nevertheless have names. Some call him "Biau Trové" (Beautiful Foundling), others call him "Fil de Roi" (King's Son), as she does too, but sometimes she calls him "Riche Orphenin" (Powerful Orphan) (K24). He is all of these things: a foundling but also a king's son, a king's son but also an orphan, with no knowledge of these things and no need to know them because, at an age when a child is cared for by women, he believes the Lady of the Lake is his mother. The fact that he is not alone, that the lady engages a good nurse for him, and later a tutor to teach him how to behave, testifies to her excellent maternal judgment. Reassurance seems to be the intent of the narrator's summary progress report at this early stage: "Ensi est Lancelos en la garde a la dame remès, si croist et amande si com vos poez oïr" (K24; Thus Lancelot remains in the care of the lady, and he grows and thrives, as you may hear).

Lancelot's education is described in terms of what he learns at various stages and his increasing beauty.²² Each stage ends with an incident that could be called a "threshold" because it presents a crisis that indicates he is ready to pass on to the next stage of education.

We first see the child during the first stage of childhood. His progress is astonishing. His behavior, his understanding, his alertness, and his nimbleness are developed beyond his years, but the narrator is not content to assert this. He documents it with evidence of an educational programme that focuses on his development in clear-cut stages and on the child's inherited nature. Thus, the child has a tutor to teach him to conduct himself as a *gentil home* (gentleman/noble man). The connotations of gentility are important, for whereas "a certain measure

¹⁹ On this subdivision of the first stage of childhood, see Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, 21–22, and on wet-nursing, 55–76 and 77.

²⁰ See Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* 74–75.

²¹ Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* 75.

²² Beauty is a feature of courtly romance knights. The narrator intimated that the beauty of the infant Lancelot was the reason why the fairy was attracted to him on the heath.

of wealth and a certain style of living are needful qualifications for nobility, gentility is more than noble rank or title, it can only be claimed in virtue of descent."²³ Gentility includes the obligation to emulate the achievements of one's ancestors.

The foundation of a noble son's education included hunting, regardless of his future aspirations, in Carolingian times as in later medieval times, as Valerie Garver shows in this volume; the manipulation of weapons and the horse-riding skills it developed were also an early foundation for a future knight's military training in the thirteenth century.²⁴ The *Lancelot* childhood narrative shows the good pedagogical sense of the child's tutor, in that it recognizes the limitations of the child's physique and also avoids unnecessary accidents. Thus Lancelot hunts on foot with weapons tailored to his size and coordination until he is old enough to ride. As soon as he can mount, he has a sound, good-looking horse equipped with reins and saddle and other things, and he rides up and down the lake, but always keeping close to the lake, in the company of youths (*vallez*), big and small, most of whom are gentle-born. His conduct is so exemplary that anyone who sees him believes he is one of the most noble-born men in the world, and the narrator obliquely refers this to his inherited nature. The hyperbolic terms that express his achievement in physical activities, so important for a future knight, also apply to his acquisition of social skills that equip him for courtly life. He learns chess, board games, and all the other games so easily that no one could teach him any more by the time he became a knight (K38-39). He expresses his joy through singing. This range of activities is in keeping with expectations for the first stage of childhood, but the ease with which he learns, either individually or socially, and the pace at which he learns, suggest that all these things come naturally to him.²⁵ This carefully controlled set of developmental activities allows his nature and nurture to work together, orchestrated by the Lady of the Lake's carefully programmed approach to his development.

Insight into the source of the child's progress comes from a portrait of him when he is ten years old. The narrator announces that it is "to be heard by all those who love to hear of great childhood beauty" (K39; a retraire oiant totes genz qui de grant biauté d'anfant voudroient oïr parole"). The emphasis on beauty is an invitation to literally see the child, and to see him as an incarnation of the courtly ideal. The portrait follows the conventions of all portraits in medieval literature

²³ Maurice Keen, *Chivalry*, 150–51, quoting the fourteenth-century knight Oliver de la Marche.

²⁴ See Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, 211; Georges Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. Sylvia Postan (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977).

²⁵ Here, as later, it also uses the "puer senex" topos of the child marvelously advanced for his years; see Ernst R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask. Bollingen Series XXXVI (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973; orig. in German, 1948), 98–101, 202, 381, 424, 427.

in showing that he possesses the ideal inner and outer qualities of a noble son and future knight—a perfect physique with crimped hair and a dimple, graciousness, fierceness when provoked, relentlessness in pursuit of wrongdoers, generosity, a quick intelligence, joyfulness. Together, these traits represent the three prized virtues of a future knight: prowess, generosity, and courtoisie,²⁶ but the portrait's one unconventional feature is his oversized chest. It is oversized because of the large size of the heart inside it. The big-hearted nature of this child is promptly illustrated in a "threshold" incident that contrasts his tutor's teaching, the child's sense of right and wrong, and the foster mother's guiding hand.

One day, when separated from his tutor while out hunting, the child gives away his horse to a poor young knight in distressed circumstances, then gives away his catch of venison to a needy *vavassor* who insists that the child accept the gift of a greyhound. Both of them are curious to know who he is, with the *vavassor* recognizing the father in the child and offering to aid him in recovering his lands, but the child knows nothing about such an identity or lands. The *vavassor* speaks "from the heart": "'Et ge cuit bien que vous soiez autresin de gentil lignaige com vos iestes de cuer'" (K43; "I think your lineage is just as noble as your heart"). In each case the child's generous conduct and his gentle language are referred to his identity, and specifically to his parentage, as he is seen to resemble his father. His language is equally noble when he reproaches the impoverished young knight: "'Comment? fait il, vos iestes gentis et puis si ploiez por mescheance qui vos aveigne? Se ce n'est d'ami que vos aiez perdu, o de honte qui faite vos soit que vos ne puissiez vengier, nus hanz cuers ne se doit esmaier de perte qui puisse estre recovree'" (K42; "Come, he says, you are high-born and yet you weep over a misfortune that has befallen you? Unless it's because of the loss of a close friend, or because of some disgrace you can't undo, no noble heart should be dismayed by a setback that can be reversed"). However, the tutor refuses to believe Lancelot's explanation of how he lost his horse and acquired the dog. He sees Lancelot's behavior as the violation of a rule to be obeyed, and threatens him. This is contrary to the moral teaching with which a tutor is entrusted.²⁷ Enraged by the child's insistence that the dog was a good exchange, the tutor contradicts the values the child espouses; he punishes him by knocking him off his horse and beating the greyhound. The child retaliates by beating his tutor violently with his bow. As Michel Rousse points out, this tutor-pupil relationship is based on threats

²⁶ On the historical development of chivalry's warrior code, see Flori, *Chevaliers et Chevalerie au Moyen Age*, 89–178, and for the ideological representation in literature, 235–66.

²⁷ See Jean Frappier, "De l' 'institution' de Lancelot dans le *Lancelot en prose*," Jean Frappier, *Amour Courtois et Table Ronde*. Publications Romanes et Françaises, 126 (Geneva: Droz, 1973), 169–79; here 175.

and coercion.²⁸ Lancelot reacts initially in the gentle, thoughtful way in which he has been brought up by the Lady, but resorts to violence only when he is faced with the tutor's violence.

As the ultimate authority for both parties, the Lady of the Lake has to arbitrate. Her way of dealing with the conflict demonstrates that she is "sage et courtoise." She has already heard the tutor's account of the events, but she greets the child lovingly, as usual, as though there was nothing wrong: "ele li rent son salu com chele qui tant l'amoit com nus cuers puet amer enfant qui de sa char n'estoit" (K46; in the greeting that she returned there was more love than any other woman's heart has ever had for a child who was not of her own flesh and blood). This suggests that he has trust in her and she in him, but she has authority over him and has to correct him. She also wants to find out why such an ideal child has acted so violently. "Filz de roi, por quoi avez vos fait tel outrage, qui avez batu et navré celui que ge vos avoie bailli por maistre et por enseigner?" (K46; "Prince, why did you do such an outrageous thing, beating and injuring the man I engaged to be your tutor and teacher?"). The child replies, "mes maistres ne mes anseignieres n'estoit il pas, la ou il me batoit, por ce que ge n'avoie fait se bien non. Ne de ma beteüre ne me chaloit il, mais il feri si durement cest mien levrier, qui est uns des meillors del monde, que par un po qu'il nel tua veiant mes iauz, por ce qu'il savoit que ge l'amoie" (K46; "He was neither a tutor nor a teacher to me, for he beat me for doing something good. I didn't care about him beating me, but he beat my greyhound really hard, one of the best hounds in the world, he almost killed it before my very eyes, because he knew I loved it"). Then he tells her how he gave away his horse and venison and dashed off to hunt furiously. The Lady is impressed with his fierce threat concerning his tutor: "Et sachiez bien, . . . dame, que ge ne le troverai ja en leu que il n'i muire se ceianz n'est" (K46; And you may be sure, . . . my lady, that if I ever find him somewhere other than here, he shall die), because it is proof that the child is on the way to becoming a *preudom* (a worthy man of integrity),²⁹ and, with God's help, she can be of great help to him in this. How does she arrive at this conclusion? Because, as he had told her, he had fought to defend a creature he loved. Yes, he does know the difference between good and evil, as children should at his age, but love was his motive. She nevertheless pretends to be upset with him, for obedience to parents

²⁸ "Le châtement et la mise à l'épreuve du jeune Lancelot," *Rewards and Punishments in the Arthurian Romances and Lyric Poetry of Medieval France*, ed. P. V. Davies and A. J. Kennedy. *Arthurian Studies*, XVII (Wolfboro, NH: D. S. Brewer, 1987), 137. As Shahar, points out, beating was the thing children feared most, and it remained a basic punishment for recalcitrant boypupils in schools through the mid twentieth century (*Childhood in the Middle Ages* 172–73).

²⁹ In Chrétien's romances, the *preudom* is a dying breed in Arthur's realm.

was one of the duties of a Christian child.³⁰ Faced with his mother's disapproval, he leaves in a fit of pique, but she calls him back and asserts her corrective authority. How dare he give away property that belonged to her, not to him, and beat his tutor who was there to keep him from doing foolish things? She does not want him to do either of these things. In return, he threatens to leave home and make his own way in life:

'Mais ançois que ge m'en aille, voil ge bien que vos sachiez que cuers d'ome ne puet a grant joie³¹ venir qui trop longuement est souz maistrise, car il lo covient sovent trambler. Ne endroit moi n'ai ge cure de maistre plus avoir, de seignor ne de dame ne di ge mie; mais maldehaz ait filz de roi s'il n'ose l'autrui chose doner qant il la soe done hardiement.' [K47]

[But before I leave, you must know that a man's heart cannot achieve great joy if it lives too long under the order of a tutor, for it is required to cower often. I have no desire to have a tutor any more, and that doesn't mean a lord or a lady; but a curse on the prince who doesn't dare to give away what belongs to another when he is bold enough to give away what belongs to him.]

In keeping with this stage of childhood development, he can express his sense of self, but his way of showing it is still uncontrolled. The Lady of the Lake sees here the emergence of an identity crisis, but nevertheless she sternly asserts her authority over him in order to correct him. Just because she calls him "filz de roi" does not mean that he is one, she says—but he replies that he has also been recognized as one. "'Well,'" she tells him, "'that person did not know you, for you are certainly not a prince'" (K47; "Or sachiez, . . . que mauvasement vos conut cil qui por fil de roi vos tint, car vos ne l'ietes mie"). He sighs, and replies: "'My Lady, this grieves me, for my heart dared to be one'" (K47; "Dame, . . . ce poise moi, car mes cuers l'osast bien estre"). He is speechless with disappointment, and turns away, but she takes his hand and brings him back, and begins to kiss him on the eyes and mouth, and the narrator remarks that, "no one who saw her would have believed that he was not her child" (K47; nus nel veïst qui ne cuidast qu'il fust ses anfes), reminding us that her gestures are further signs of the motherly love that he received as an infant on the heath, and that, moreover, they are signs of a good mother-child bond.³²

³⁰ Life at the lake does include going to church, although this is not emphasized, as noted by Frappier, "L'institution," 178, n. 28.

³¹ Kennedy reads "ne puet a grant joie venir", but the majority of the manuscripts read "a grant bien", and variants include "a grant cose" and "a grant honnor" (see K2, 96). Micha reads "a grant honnor" (7, 83).

³² Her affection would be condemned by preachers and didactic writers in the Middle Ages, who "exhorted parents to avoid demonstrations of affection towards children after the age of 7 lest the children become proud and stray from the path of righteousness" (Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle*

The Lady of the Lake has to tread a fine line. On the one hand, she is impressed by his clear sense of what he wants, and that he can express it nobly, but on the other hand he cannot leave home because he is unprepared for the world outside. As Micheline de Combarieu points out, he would be killed.³³ At best, he would be thrown into a world where, like Perceval, he would be unable to read the signs. His foster mother reassures him and explains what she wants: she does want him to be generous, when he is old enough. But she also accepts that he wants to be his own lord and tutor, because in this way he will learn for himself what a good childhood is all about. In other words, he has to learn by experience, which means he will learn by feeling as well as knowing. She thus relinquishes a measure of control over him, because it will keep him at home and simultaneously allow her to more directly guide his education in nobility. He will have the opportunity to develop his noble potential without intervention from a tutor, and to control his behavior like a prince. Behind her decision is the belief that "Prince" is not simply a title attached to him by birth, but one that must be earned. This puts the onus on him while it simultaneously gives him the feeling of freedom that comes from being in charge of his future development, of making himself what he wants to be.

The Lady of the Lake's decision seems to have worked well, for the next time we meet Lancelot he has moved on to the next stage of his education. The large majority of noble sons destined for knighthood in the Middle Ages were younger sons, who would normally leave home to serve at a lord's court and move in the world of men for the second stage of their education. This meant that they would have very little contact with their mother after leaving home sometime between the age of seven and ten.³⁴ Leaving home is not an option for Lancelot, given the need to hide his identity. Instead, he stays at home, as was customary for the eldest son of a great lord, who was expected to take over from his father eventually and would learn about lordship at home under his father's watch. Thus, at this stage of Lancelot's childhood, the Lady of the Lake follows the norm for the education of a king's son's (which is what the child is by birth), except that the foster mother acts "in loco parentis."

We next see Lancelot acting as a page in service to his Lady, who, since she replaces his father as well as his mother, is also his lord. He cuts her meat at dinner and waits to be seated until she has begun her meal. A younger son destined for knighthood would, at this stage of his education, be living and

Ages, 4).

³³ de Combarieu, "Le Lancelot comme roman d'apprentissage: enfance, demesure et chevalerie," *Approches du Lancelot en prose*, ed. Jean Dufournet (Geneva and Paris: Slatkine, 1984), 101–36; here 116. By the same author, see also "Un Coeur gros comme ça" *Le 'Cuer' au Moyen Age: Realite et Senefiance*, Senefiance, 30 (Aix-en-Provence: Universite de Provence, 1991), 77–105.

³⁴ See Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, 217. There is a parallel here with boys sent away to boarding school (single-sex schools) in later centuries.

training in a group with other noble sons. Maurice Keen describes this group living a rough and ready lifestyle that exposed the youngsters to the sweaty, turbulent existence of the knights themselves.³⁵ The Lady of the Lake adjusts her program to the conditions at hand, by adding the companionship of two future knights. They are his younger cousins, orphans whom she rescues from their father's enemy. Lancelot's anonymity is protected, however, since they do not know they have any cousins and he believes they are his lady's nephews. The three children eat from the same dish, sleep in the same bed, and Lancelot acts as his lady's messenger to ensure that his cousins settle in. The contrast between him and his cousins is remarkable: they have been raised by their parents' enemy, they know the wrong done to their parents, they bear the psychological scars of their exposure to the raw violence of the outside world, and they are accustomed to the world of men. As a result, they are fearful and insecure. On seeing this, does Lancelot still want to leave home and earn his living in the world outside? No. He counsels his cousins to be patient and wait until they are older and stronger and can count on the help of others in order to redress the injustice done to their parents. In keeping with the developmental expectations of this stage of childhood, the wisdom of his words gives him a moral autonomy and sense of self that his cousins do not have, indeed his words could have come from his fairy mother herself. At this stage we also see the extent of the Lady's love for the child, which seems to grow exponentially. When he serves at table:

Et ele se delitoit autresin en lui esgarder comme cele qui mises avoit an lui totes les amors que l'an puet en enfant metre par pitie de norreture; et plus l'amoit ele assez que pitiez de norriture ne querroit, car nule fame ne poist pas plus amer nul afant que ele aüst porte dedanz son vandre. [K106]

[She took as much pleasure in looking at him as a woman would who had given him all the love one can give a child through compassionate nurturing; and her love was greater than nurturing required, indeed a woman who had carried him in her belly could not have loved her child more.]

Lancelot's beauty is given extra emphasis at this stage and the narrative's strong visual content invites us to literally see the signs of nobility in his conduct and his person. Lancelot welcomes his lady's guests nobly and impresses them. We also see the recognition of nobility that others accord him. For example, he arrives for dinner with a large company of young servants, who show him all the honors due to a young lord, as do the adult knights present. The Lady, as usual, sees him before the meal and gently places kisses on his eyes and mouth. His self-discipline is exemplary: he serves his Lady at dinner first, then takes his seat, after which the rest of the company is seated. The signs of his noble identity are growing, and

³⁵ Keen, *Chivalry*, ch. VIII.

with them his sense of a hierarchy of noble authority. For example, he had refused at first to take his meals with his cousins because he knew they were sons of a king, and therefore of higher rank than he. But the Lady had forced him to observe the usual order of service, on the grounds that *“ja de rien . . . que ge vos face faire, ne seroiz por vilains tenuz a droit”* (K107; “whatever I make you do, you will never be considered low-born”). So Lancelot has learned to serve at table as a page in his Lady’s household, to obey her, and to succour the weak and needy (his cousins). More importantly, he has learned that service to his Lady must come first. Indeed, when he rides out in the style of a knight in training, he rides obediently beside her as his Lady’s knight, with a made-to-measure sword hanging from his saddle, and a valet to carry his bow and arrows. She has achieved her aim, as he has learned to trust her judgment in his quest for nobility.

An old retainer from the children’s family reveals to the Lady of the Lake the high lineage of their fathers, but that their mothers’ lineage is exalted because they believe it goes back to the lineage of David in the Scriptures. The Lady of the Lake assures him that she has the means to protect them, so they will remain at the lake as companions in need and family connections for the future that Lancelot can use.

As the narrative moves into adolescence, at age 14 or 15, the child’s curiosity turns increasingly to his identity. Accordingly, a further threshold incident throws Lancelot’s progress into relief. During this stage, Lancelot calls his cousin Lionel, “cousin.”³⁶ Does this mean Lancelot has discovered that his companions are, in fact, his cousins? The Lady of the Lake gently questions him, but he reassures her that it was just a slip of the tongue. All the same, she seizes the opportunity to raise the question of identity indirectly, asking him to tell her solemnly who he thinks is the more noble, himself or Lionel. We see his powers of reflection: he himself doesn’t know how noble he is by lineage, he does not know the origins of nobility, but he knows he is more courageous than Lionel, and he has heard that everyone is descended from a man and a woman but he doesn’t know why some people have more nobility than others, unless they acquire it through prowess. He has begun to reflect on her teaching. This philosophical view reflects the Lady of the Lake’s emphasis on the virtue of prowess. It is a pragmatic approach that has allowed him to focus on what he can achieve. She reassures him, loyally, that he cannot fail to be one of the noblest men in the world. His gratitude is profound:

“Dame, . . . de Deu soiez vos beneoite qant vos si tost lo m’avez dit, car [a] ce me feroiz venir ou ge ne cuidoe ja ataindre. Ne ge n’avoie de rien nul si grant desirrier

³⁶ In medieval times, as today, “cousin” can be a catch-all term for any family member, regardless of the degree of blood relationship.

comme de gentillece avoir. Or ne me poise mie mout se cist m'ont servi et honore, encore soient il fil de roi, qant ge porrai ancore a els ataindre et a els valoir o a passer" [K111].

[Lady, . . . God bless you for telling me that so soon, for with your help I will achieve what I never thought I could. My greatest wish was to have nobility. It does not bother me at all that they have served me and honored me, even though they are princes, as long as I can catch up with them and be just as worthy, or surpass them.]

Not only has he learned the lessons she wanted him to learn, but he has also comprehended the principles behind them, which shows that his intellectual development is progressing apace. At the same time, he accepts that she is in charge and accepts the direction she gives to his life.

The effect of Lancelot's words is astounding: "Par cels paroles qui si sont de grant san et de haut cuer enble si Lanceloz lo cuer sa dame que plus l'aimme que ele ne siaut, ne ne s'an puet consirrer, ainz croist l'amors que ele met an lui et anforce de jor an jor" (K111; With these words, of such great-minded and great-hearted, Lancelot steals his Lady's heart, for she loves him more than ever, and cannot imagine being without him, indeed the love she has for him grows and becomes stronger with each day.) Not only is his language refined and courtly, it also refers repeatedly to the faith he owes her as "ma dame" (my Lady): "'vos qui iestes ma dame et ma mere'" (K110; "you who are my Lady and my mother"), "'dites lo me verairement come ma dame?'" (K111; "are you telling me this truthfully as my Lady?"). The Lady of the Lake can surely hear in his words the future knight thanking his chosen Lady who will inspire him to heroic feats of chivalry.

As time goes by, the Lady of the Lake loves him so much that this creates an apparent dilemma. Will she be strong enough to take her leave of him, or will she keep him with her in her domain beyond the age of insertion into knighthood, as Perceval's mother probably did with her son? Does the fact that she is a fairy, and therefore ageless and eternally beautiful, also raise the prospect of her keeping the youth as her knight lover? It would mean that he would be lost to the Arthurian world of chivalry. Fortunately, to allay our suspicions, the narrator emphasizes the conditional nature of her thoughts:

Et se ne fust li granz desirriers que ele avoit de son bien et de son amandement, ele n'eüst si grant duel de nule rien comme de ce qu'il creissoit tant et anforçoit, car bien voit qu'il sera par tans si granz et si anbariz que chevalier lo covandra estre et cerchier les merveilleusses avantures en loin et es estranges pais; et lors l'avra, ce li est vis, autresin comme perdu, puis que ele nel verra sovant. Ne ele ne voit pas comment ele se puisse consirrer de lui veoir; si i pense tant que toz autres pensez en met arrieres [K111].

[Had it not been for her overwhelming desire for his welfare and his improvement, the fact that he was growing much taller and stronger every day would have caused

her such grief as she had never known, for she sees clearly that he will soon be so tall and strong that he will have to be made a knight and seek marvelous adventures in strange lands far and wide; and then, it seems to her that he will be as good as lost to her, for she will not see him often. She does not see how she could bear not seeing him; and she thinks about this so much that she can think of nothing else.]

This must surely be one of the most powerful expressions in medieval literature of a mother's painful feelings of separation at the prospect of her child leaving home. It also introduces suspense over whether she will be strong enough to do what she must do. She reacts lovingly, by making sure that Lancelot's cousins have everything they want, and she does this for the sake of Lancelot. Thus, she redistributes the surplus of her love and gives it to the two cousins. She consoles herself with the thought that when Lancelot leaves to be a knight, she will still have his cousins with her.

She knows that the time for separation has come when, at eighteen years of age, Lancelot finds her weeping (over his imminent departure) and offers to defend her against the person who has offended her. His offer suggests a knight whose sensitivity to the plight of women brings them joy, just as he will do in the outside world. Eventually, the Lady of the Lake's head overrules her heart, such is her deep pleasure at the achievement that he represents. She allows him to select his career—he chooses to become a knight in king Arthur's house because that is where he understands all the *preudom* are—and she instructs him in the duties and burdens of a knight, to the best of her ability. At their parting, she kisses him gently: "Atant li baise la boiche et la face et les deus iauz mout durement, si s'en est torne tel duel faisant qe l'an n'an puet parole traire" (K155; Then she kissed his mouth, his cheeks, and his eyes with tenderness, and she turns away so overcome with grief that she cannot utter a word). The picture replays with appropriate variation the situation on the heath, but this time the joy and the grief belong to one woman alone, not to two.

Valerie Garver's essay in this volume demonstrates the extent to which prescriptive writings and monastic ideals informed the education of lay children in Carolingian society, but Lancelot's education—although separate from the outside world—has no strong religious component, no promotion of piety, no mention of sin, although he does attend church and we later find that he had learned to read.³⁷ We can measure the distance between Lancelot's education and the religious model if we compare it with Juanita Ruys' discerning account of the didactic tone, religious content, and allusive nature of the advice that Abelard

³⁷ "The Influence of Monastic Ideals upon Carolingian Conceptions of Childhood."

offers to his son Astrolabe.³⁸ Lancelot, in contrast, is raised "with maternal affection, though with restraint and without pampering, in line with the recommendations of the didactic writers."³⁹ He does learn his lessons well, he is obedient and chooses to be made a knight at Arthur's court of his own volition. What are we to make of the Lady of the Lake's love for her foster child? It has removed the suffering of his parents from his experience as a child and replaced it with joy. It is indeed a great love, but does she love him too much? He unknowingly "steals her heart" with his professions of loyalty to her, and it is his beauty that she will miss. Their love is mutual. Her love might seem to have transgressed the boundaries of a caring mother's love, especially as Lancelot grows into adolescence, but when maternal love does appear in romances, it adopts the effusive models of courtly love and mystical love.⁴⁰ Has the Dame du Lac "spared the child and spoiled the rod," as medieval moralists might assert?⁴¹ There is no answer here, but this is the implicit tension that the romance has built into its storytelling. What we do know is that the pain felt by the Lady of the Lake at the prospect of losing her foster son is overcome by her desire for his advancement in the world and her pride in preparing the "perfect knight" for knighthood. Assessing the impact of her childhood education on the future marvelous actions of Lancelot, will be the fruit of ever more cleverly crafted storytelling in a romance that offers neverending stories.

³⁸ See her contribution to this volume: "Peter Abelard's *Carmen ad Astralabium* and Medieval Parent-Child Didactic Texts." Note, however, Abelard's insistence on the importance of personal virtue as opposed to virtue assumed passively by inheritance (which is also a cornerstone of the Lady of the Lake's education), and his awareness of family identity.

³⁹ Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, 220; see also Eva Parra Membrives's sensitive study of Frau Ava's maternal images in this volume: "Mutterliebe aus weiblicher Perspektive: Zur Bedeutung von Affektivität in Frau Avas *Leben Jesu*."

⁴⁰ Doris Desclais Berkvam, *Enfance et maternité dans la littérature française des XII^e et XIII^e siècles*. Collection Essais, 8 (Paris: H. Champion, 1981), 140–41.

⁴¹ This issue was very much at the center of attention in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century pedagogy, as Allison P. Coudert demonstrates in her contribution to this volume: "Educating Girls in Early Modern Europe and America."

Tracy Adams

(University of Auckland)

Medieval Mothers and their Children

The Case of Isabeau of Bavaria in Light of Medieval Conduct Books

While Philippe Aries's claim that during the Middle Ages "the idea of childhood did not exist" has provoked refutation among historians for decades, the notion remains a truism, and not without reason.¹ Medieval manuscript illuminations certainly indicate that children dressed like small adults, and the focus upon children characteristic of the modern family seems to be a relatively recent creation, as Aries suggested. Different from today, people of the Middle Ages did not privilege a baby's exclusive and intensely emotional relationship with a parent as crucial to its future development.² Abandonment appears to have been common among the less privileged classes.³ Noble parents were often physically absent from their children's lives, sending them off to be fostered and using them as pawns in diplomatic marriage games.⁴ This apparent indifference toward the

¹ See Philippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), 128. The thesis of Aries is widely known and accepted by the general public. See, for example, Jeff Stryker's article in the *New York Times* of Sunday, July 13, 1997, "The Age of Innocence Isn't What It Once Was," and a review of Nicholas Orme's *Medieval Childhood* in the *Commonweal* for April 5, 2002, which states: "The gist of Aries's view has now percolated into general awareness: in premodern Europe, high infant mortality left parents emotionally detached from their children; adults regarded children as miniature adults, and both inhabited a culture without much sense of childhood as a distinct period of life."

² Brigitte H. E. Niestroj historicizes the modern view of the bond between mothers and babies in "Les femmes en tant que meres et la formation de l'esprit européen. Une contribution à l'histoire de la psychologie du développement et de la socialisation première," *La petite enfance dans l'Europe médiévale et moderne*, ed. Robert Fossier (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1997), 133–62.

³ However, abandonment waxed and waned with socio-economic shifts. See John Boswell's chapters on the phenomenon during the Middle Ages in *The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

⁴ For positive perspectives on mother love during the Middle Ages see Clarissa W. Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), especially chapter 5, "'Mother of Love, Mother of Tears': Holiness and Families in the Later Middle

emotions of children seems to indicate that they were not felt to be valuable in and of themselves, and that childhood was not considered a special and distinct status, worthy of protection.

Still, as Albrecht Classen observes in the introduction to this collection, a paradigm shift away from Ariès's thesis is underway in the modern perception of medieval childhood, driven by the increased awareness that the study of childhood is in fact the study of a given culture's construction of childhood by and recent critical interest in the history of the emotions. In this essay I will argue that one reason for the perception that the medieval mother did not enjoy strong emotional bonds with her children is that noble society constructed her as an intercessor figure with little power of her own, inferior to her children's father, charged with perpetuating the values of her rigidly hierarchical society in her offspring. Much as she might love her children, her first responsibility was to her male superiors, as that mythical model of patience, Griselda, testifies.⁵ The same was true of the Virgin Mary, exemplar of maternal intercession. Penny Schine Gold has noted that the Coronation of the Virgin imagery depicts Mary in glory, "while at the same time, with a bend of the head, adding the quality of humble submission."⁶ She willingly accepted her son's death despite the sorrow it caused her. As Jaroslav Pelikan observes, "Mary had simultaneously lamented the death of Christ because he was her Son and welcomed it because he was her Savior and the Savior of the world."⁷ Thus the Marian model suggests that a mother's mission should not be to keep her child close beside her, interfering in its destiny, but to do her utmost to see that destiny carried out, whatever the loss to herself. The *Mater Dolorosa* standing below her crucified son who figured prominently in Books of Hours—the single most common type of book among female owners during the period—glorified the maternal lot of suffering helplessly on the sidelines.⁸ True,

Ages," 144–93; Majorie Chibnall, "The Empress Matilda and her Sons," 279–94; Lois L. Huneycutt, "Public Lives, Private Ties: Royal Mothers in England and Scotland, 1070–1204," 295–311; and Kimberly Lo Prete, "Adela of Blois as Mother and Countess," 313–33, all in *Medieval Mothering*, ed. John Carmi Parsons and Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Garland, 1996). For a negative assessment of maternal attitudes see Ralph V. Turner, "Eleanor of Aquitaine and Her Children: An Inquiry into Medieval Family Attachment," *Journal of Medieval History* 14 (1988): 321–35.

⁵ Not one of the major medieval authors who tell Griselda's story—Petrarch, Boccaccio, Chaucer, Christine de Pizan, the *Menagier of Paris*—faults Griselda for placing her husband's commands before the welfare of her children.

⁶ Penny Schine Gold, *The Lady and the Virgin: Image, Attitude, and Experience in Twelfth-Century France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 73.

⁷ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 126.

⁸ Susan Groag Bell writes that women who owned only one book were most likely to own a Book of Hours: "In cases where only one book could be attributed to a woman, the book was almost invariably a devotional item. These books of piety included Gospels, Psalters, lives of the saints, and, in large part, Books of Hours." "Medieval Women Bookowners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and

the argument that "all women resemble the Virgin Mary," writes Marina Warner, "is very rare, for every facet of the Virgin had been systematically developed to diminish not increase, her likeness to the female condition."⁹ And yet, the Virgin's docile image was omnipresent, decorating Books of Hours, sermons, and the walls of Churches. Western society has not generally understood "paternal" love to be an innate universal drive, and thus, for the modern audience, the apparent distance between medieval fathers and their children arouses no particular discomfort. On the other hand, the idea that a mother would abandon or put her children out to be fostered seems abominable from a modern psychological perspective. However, when her principal role is understood as intercessory, these actions become more comprehensible. John Boswell notes that in Bordeaux in 1234 a council urged mothers who abandoned their children to leave them in cribs and place some salt beside them to signify that they had been baptized.¹⁰ A woman abandoning her child was likely to do so because she could not take care of it, but she could facilitate its being taken into the care of others by leaving it in a safe place where it would be discovered. And as long as the child was baptized, society believed, the mother had performed her most significant duty, clearing the way for its entry into heaven. The habit of fostering also makes sense in the context of a society that saw the mother's function as mediator for her children, doing everything possible to maximize their chances for future success. In a world where insecurity and loss were the norm, offering one's child a better situation was an act of motherly love.

This is the framework within which medieval motherhood must be examined. It is not easy to recover the attitudes toward their own children and childhood in general from women so thoroughly embedded in a system that demanded their complicity and obedience, and especially from women who left virtually no personal writings. Much more can be gleaned about the means by which noble mothers of a slightly later period carried out their mediating activity on behalf of their offspring and how they felt about their families from correspondence that has survived, like that of the family and associates of Honor Lisle, wife of the governor of Calais under Henry VIII. Tirelessly active within her large network of family and friends and positively impressing many of her correspondents, Honor Lisle exemplifies how the feminine position of mediator could be used effectively.¹¹ However, nothing comparable to the Lisle letters exists for the fourteenth and

Ambassadors of Culture," *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, eds. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1988), 149–87; here 160.

⁹ See Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), 153.

¹⁰ See Boswell, 324.

¹¹ Muriel St. Clare Byrne has edited *The Lisle Letters* in 6 volumes (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981).

fifteenth centuries. Thus more indirect approaches are necessary for this earlier period. Using as a filter the assumptions about mothers as mediating figures that emerge from two conduct books of the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth century, one by Christine de Pizan, and the other by the Knight of La Tour-Landry, I propose to re-examine the modern narrative of maternity that has been constructed around one notorious historical mother, the Queen of France, Isabeau of Bavaria, asking whether the crimes that have been attributed her are not products of a system that restricted her maternal role to one of mediation. The conduct books articulate and struggle in different ways with the ideal of motherhood as mediatrix in a rigidly hierarchical society. I will suggest that in their accounts of Isabeau as a terrible mother, historians have generally failed to take account of the constraints and contradictions that marked this medieval concept of motherhood, and that they have thus overlooked signs of the Queen's love for her children, producing a distorted image of her maternal qualities. This distorted image, I argue in my conclusion, is emblematic in many ways of modern re-constructions of medieval motherhood. As Eva Parra Membrives notes in her article on the recluse Frau Ava in this collection, the example of one woman cannot be taken as universal, for women are not necessarily similar: "Die hier exemplarisch untersuchten Fälle beanspruchen dabei selbstverständlich keinen Universalcharakter," she writes, "dürfen es natürlich auch nicht. Denn, obwohl sich viele dieser Texte weiblichen Ursprungs zuweilen in einigen . . . Stellen sehr eng berühren, ist Frau, und dies auch in mittelalterlichen Zeiten, nicht immer mit Frau gleichzusetzen"¹² ["These exemplary case studies do not, of course, claim universal validity, and of course must not. After all, although many texts by female authors share certain aspects here and there, woman, and this also in the Middle Ages, is not always identical with woman"]. But if the story of Isabeau does not permit sweeping generalizations about maternal emotions, I suggest that her fate and after-life do allow some generalizations on modern understandings of medieval motherhood. Her story represents the contradictory givens of medieval motherhood played out in a worst case scenario. The modern myth surrounding Isabeau might explain in part why Aries and others drew their conclusions regarding emotive relationships between parents and children.

¹² See Eva Parra Membrives's contribution to this volume, "Mutterliebe aus weiblicher Perspektive. Zur Bedeutung von Affektivität in Frau Avas Leben Jesu." 90–91.

Christine de Pizan's *Livre des Trois Vertus*

In the two female courtesy books I will examine here, the mother is constructed as her husband's deputy, charged with enforcing his authority, and one of her primary duties is to train her children to assume their social roles so that as adults they will perpetuate the ideals of their rigidly hierarchical society. From a mother's perspective, childhood was a metaphorical minefield, because of the high probability of early death. But it was all the more so because those who survived had to be trained early and decisively to assume responsibility for the continued success of their families. Medieval children, like their modern counterparts, were impulsive and unwilling to respect limitations. But unlike modern societies, which find nothing very disturbing in the erratic behavior of children, medieval societies were highly ambivalent toward the young, divided over whether they resisted authority out of inherent badness or simple lack of training.¹³ The Augustinian legacy regarded youngsters as hopelessly corrupt by nature. On the other hand, the widespread iconography of the massacre of the innocents constructs children as guiltless victims, as Jean Jost writes in her contribution to this collection.¹⁴ Regarding this ambivalence, Jean Batany reveals the common thread between the two views: "Le terme-clé est ici le mot *divers*, si important dans l'éthique du Moyen Âge: le personnage *divers*, c'est celui dont on ne peut prévoir les actes, en qui on ne peut avoir confiance—une cause d'angoisse perpétuelle pour une époque toujours en quête de sécurité matérielle et morale." ["The key word here is *unpredictable*, so important to the ethos of the Middle Ages: the *unpredictable* character is someone whose actions we cannot foretell, in whom we have no confidence—a constant cause for worry in an age that was always in search of material and moral security."]¹⁵ As the intermediary preparing the way for her fickle offspring to enter into an unforgiving and strictly categorized society, the mother bore a heavy responsibility.

But even though she was ultimately responsible for transforming erratic youngsters into predictable adults capable of performing their allotted social roles, the mother had no real authority over her children; any she possessed was delegated to her by her husband. In the *Livre des Trois Vertus*, written in 1405 for the young Dauphine Marguerite of Burgundy, Christine de Pizan describes the

¹³ See also the discussion of early-modern childhood in Allison Coudert's contribution to this volume, "Educating Girls in Early Modern Europe and America."

¹⁴ Jean Jost, "Medieval Children: Treatment in Middle English Literature."

¹⁵ J. Batany, "Regards sur l'enfance dans la littérature moralisante," *Annales de Démographie Historique* (1973): 123–27; here 125. My translation.

role of motherhood with acute insight.¹⁶ Because she sees the maternal role of mother as one aspect of the larger role of women within the household and society, I will begin by describing this more general position.

In the social world Christine describes, men frequently behave like violent thugs. The princess, writes Christine, is a mediator, a "moyenne de paix."¹⁷ When social disruption threatens, she arbitrates between her husband the prince and warring lords,

disant que le mesfait est moult grant et que a bonne cause en est le prince indigné, et que s'entente est de s'en vengier si comme il est raison, mais nonpourtant elle, qui voudroit tousjours le bien de paix, ou cas que ilz se voudroient amender ou en faire amande convenable, mettroit volentiers peine d'essaier, se pacifier les pourroit vers son seigneur.

(saying that the misdeed was very serious and that with good cause the prince is angry about it, and that he intends to avenge himself for it as is right; nonetheless she, who would always want the good of peace, if they would like to make amends or make suitable reparations, would happily make an effort to try to find a way to pacify her husband.)¹⁸

Moreover, if her own husband is badly behaved (as he is likely to be, Christine avers) the wife will act as a mediator between him and God, increasing her own personal holiness as she persuades him through her loving guidance to reform: "ja l'omme si pervers ne sera que conscience et raison ne lui die: tu as grant tort et grant pechie contre ta bonne et honneste femme. . . ." [there will never be a man so perverse that conscience and reason do not tell him: you behave wrongfully and sinfully against you good and honest wife. . .].¹⁹ However, the woman's intercessory role is mapped onto a hierarchy that allows men to ignore the advice of women if they choose. How then does the female exert her pacifying influence? Carefully and cleverly, through her diplomatically-expressed recommendations. She has no further power.

¹⁶ *Le Livre des Trois Vertus*, ed. and intro. Charity Cannon Willard (Paris: Champion, 1989). *Le Livre des Trois Vertus* addresses women from all levels of society, including even poor women and prostitutes. Of course, these addressees could not have read the book. Christine's purpose seems to have been to express a feeling of solidarity, demonstrating that they were all subject to similar constraints as women, even though their situations were very different.

¹⁷ *Trois Vertus*, 35. On the queen as intercessor see John Carmi Parsons, "Ritual and Symbol in the English Medieval Queenship to 1500," *Women and Sovereignty*, ed. Louise Olga Fradenburg (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), 60–77.

¹⁸ *Trois Vertus*, 34–35. My translations.

¹⁹ *Trois Vertus*, 56. As for badly behaved husbands, Christine counsels against re-marriage for widows, noting that if conjugal life tended to be happy in general, perhaps it would be a good idea. But conjugal life is generally miserable! *Trois Vertus*, 193.

In her maternal role, a woman is subject to the same restrictions. The father makes all the important decisions about the children's education, choosing the tutor, for example, as Christine writes. The mother can only make suggestions: "Et mettra peine la sage dame qu'il plaise au pere qu'ilz [the children] soient introduis ou latin, et que aucunement sentent des sciences" [And the wise woman will make an effort to see that the father will agree to the children being introduced to Latin and other areas of knowledge].²⁰ But even though she has no direct authority over them, the mother will carefully watch over ("avisier," 59) all aspects of their well being, insuring that the tutors and caretakers hired by her husband are doing their jobs.²¹ To this end, she will personally observe her children's moral and intellectual instruction (rather than relying upon the reports of others), visiting them in their rooms, putting them to bed and getting them up in the morning, even though the household includes others specifically engaged to do this.²²

The loving mother, then, watches over her children, interceding on their behalf, although she has no direct power to make changes. Good mothering thus requires great powers of persuasion. This is all the more true when the mother in question is a widow. In this case it is up to her to mediate between her children and those who would snatch everything they possess from them, keeping the family estates intact until her children can fend for themselves. To her falls the duty of maintaining peace among the barons, who are inclined to rebel whenever a prince dies leaving only a minor in his place: "Adonc lui aura mestier tenir en amour les barons, afin que toujours soyent bons et loyaulx et de bon conseil a son enfant; les chevaliers, escuiers, et gentliz homes, afin que de plus grant cuer volentiers and hardiement [se combatant] se mestier est, et maintiennent la guerre pour leur joenne seigneur. . ." [Thus she will need to maintain the love of the barons, so that they will always be good and loyal and offer good counsel to her child, as well as that of the knights and gentlemen, so that they will willingly and vigorously fight, if need be, and do battle for their young seigneur. . .].²³ Furthermore, the mother will mobilize the barons to support her son. At the same time she will control her son's behavior, eliciting generosity and nobility in him by reminding him of the loyalty his men bear him. With such words ["telz manieres de paroles"], she will move her son to treat his people well and thereby prevent rebellions.

As for the affective ties between the mediating mother and her children, certainly part of the supervising mother's motivation, according to Christine, is that looking out for one's children is praiseworthy. The loving "sage dame" will receive social approval: "si les bien tenir chierement, et est grant loz de dire que

²⁰ *Trois Vertus*, 60.

²¹ *Trois Vertus*, 59.

²² *Trois Vertus*, 59.

²³ *Trois Vertus*, 85.

elle en soit soigneuse. . . "[as she holds them dear, and to say that she takes good care of them is great praise].²⁴ But if Christine is concerned about a mother's "loz" or praise, she nonetheless assumes that women genuinely love their offspring. They watch over their children in the first place because they are naturally inclined to do so: the "nature de mere" is "encline au regart de ses enfans" [inclined to watching over her children].²⁵ Her desire to see them well-brought up and educated is a function of her love for them. Christine writes that the "sage dame qui chierement les aimera sera diligente que ilz soient bien endoctrinéz. . ." [the wise woman who loves them will diligently make sure that they be well educated].²⁶ Nothing is more delightful than spending time with one's children, she writes, offering family time as an alternative to love affairs for the unhappily married: "Celles qui ont enfans, quelle plus grant plaisance ne plus gracieuse peut elle demander et plus delictable, que de souvent les veoir et prendre garde que bien soient nourriz et endoctrinéz. . ." [Those who have children, what greater or more gracious or more delightful pleasure could she ask than to see them often and take care that they be well-raised and instructed. . .].²⁷

Christine's conduct book views motherhood, then, as one aspect of the larger mediating role women play in society. Fraught with contradiction, the role is manageable by those with a high degree of social intelligence— sharp skills of observation and the ability to dissimulate, immense tact and rhetorical ability. Loving her children dearly, the watchful and wise mother protects her sons from predators through the judicious exercise of her wit reinforced by an impeccable reputation. As for her daughters, she offers them an image of self-control, training them through her own example in how to maneuver in a society that severely disadvantages them ["le sage maintien d'elle sera exemple aux filles de semblablement eulx gouverner"].²⁸ The woman depicted in Christine's *Livre des Trois Vertus* is a fearless manipulator of a game whose rules she fully understands, a loving mother, and an example of how to carry out an extremely difficult job. Although Christine ostensibly grounds the role in personal morality, the person she describes is clever rather than good.

²⁴ *Trois Vertus*, 59.

²⁵ *Trois Vertus*, 59.

²⁶ *Trois Vertus*, 60.

²⁷ *Trois Vertus*, 116.

²⁸ *Trois Vertus*, 61.

The Knight of La Tour-Landry

The successful assumption of motherhood in medieval French society as Christine describes it, then, was anything but straightforward. According to her, acting out the role of wife already required a knack for dissimulation, for swallowing anger when she was abused, for stroking egos. Men were often rash or just plain foolish, and because of this, apt to endanger the health of others as well as their own immortal souls. A wife needed to be cunning to keep her husband out of trouble. The role of motherhood added a layer of complication. Still required to obey, mothers had to juggle competing loyalties, intervening for their children while submitting to their husband.

The courtesy book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry, *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles*, written around 1380, which the protagonist claims in his introduction to have composed out of love for his young daughters, similarly bespeaks the complicated position of the mother and suggests how it can be carried out successfully, although without the expression of feminine subjectivity that Christine's book evinces. Rather, the Knight's collection teaches from a male perspective how a mother should train her children.

The Knight's work manifests the complicated position of the mother in its very structure, which mimics the social practice Christine describes in assigning to the mother the role of moral educator of her small children but in leaving the serious decisions about education to the father. In the introduction to his collection, the Knight makes father and mother co-educators, writing that "tout père et mère selon Dieu et nature doit enseigner ses enfans et les destourner de male voye et leur monstrier le vray et droit chemin" [every father and mother according to God and nature should instruct their children and keep them from the wrong road and show them the true and right road. . .].²⁹ However, the Knight himself is the teacher in this book. The girls' mother appears in an episode only at the end, and then as a foil, ostensibly to challenge, but in fact to parrot her husband's beliefs, as I will discuss. The only other substantial reference to mothers takes the form of a group of eight stories about the first mother, Eve, who like many of the examples in this work represents a sneaky woman who gets caught. Although Eve and the Dame of La Tour-Landry signify opposite sides of the maternal spectrum, they incarnate the same mental capacity, and the same capacity demonstrated by Christine's women, cunning. But whereas the Dame of La Tour-Landry masters the skill, using it to her advantage, Eve does not. The book overwhelmingly makes the point that no one is to be trusted, and it constructs male/female relationships

²⁹ *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles*, ed. Anatole de Montaiglon (Paris: Jannet, 1854), 4.

as antagonistic contests where the woman usually loses, often as a result of "cosmic" justice. In fact, the Knight's subject matter moved Anthony Fitz-Herbert in 1534 in a book on husbandry to comment that the book in fact trains his readers in trickery by providing his readers with the models they would not have conceived of otherwise.³⁰ The choice of subject matter seems odd. And yet perhaps the choice is not so odd at all. For if the Knight ostensibly condemns trickery, as both he and Christine make clear, the successful wife and mother needs above all to be clever.

In its structure, then, the book reveals the extent to which the mother was the subject of her husband. This is equally visible in the content of the book. In the first of the tales devoted to Eve, the daughters are advised to shun the model of our first mother, whose fault lay in trusting her own opinion and failing to get Adam's advice before tasting the forbidden apple.³¹ The moral is that a wife should ask her husband before she does anything. And yet, in another of the stories, Eve is castigated for taking advantage of Adam's stupidity. Even if she did not want to do good herself, she shouldn't have advised him to sin with her.³² This attitude is part of a pattern established by the book of constructing the wife as mediator for her husband who through idiocy or boorishness tends to get himself in trouble with important people. The wife is counseled to go to the relevant authorities to rescue her husband; she must "par tout le sauver et garder comme son seigneur, combien qu'il soit fol ou divers, puisque Dieux le lui a donne" [in every way take care of him and keep him as her master, however foolish or unpredictable he may be, because God has given him to her].³³ This wastrel is of course the same to whom the wife must defer. Keeping such a ridiculous figure on the straight and narrow, all the while letting him believe that he is the master is a difficult task, requiring skill and duplicity. Eve, for her part, is not up to the task. Instead of helping Adam to overcome his sinful inclinations, she encourages him to err. One wonders why Adam did not assert himself in favor of obedience, given his right to command. Still, Eve bears the blame according to the Knight, and not only for herself. Her bad decision destroys the future for all her children, for all times. Motherhood is a heavy responsibility.

The Knight further illustrates the conflicts of motherhood in his framing material. Shortly before the end of the book he and his wife begin a debate over whether girls should partake of love games. He makes the case for carefully controlled pleasure, arguing that in certain cases a woman should love "par

³⁰ *Chevalier*, xlix–li.

³¹ *Chevalier*, 87.

³² *Chevalier*, 94–95.

³³ *Chevalier*, 180.

amours."³⁴ He is vigorously refuted by his wife, who obviously has been affected by his view of the world as teeming with tricksters. She asserts that because no one can ever be trusted, women should protect themselves against all men. Long before the debate on love, the Knight had already made his position on flirtation plain, describing himself as a bachelor meeting a prospective wife. Although his potential fiancée was "belle et bonne" and spoke wonderfully well, she seemed too "apperte," as if she had known him all her life. On the way home with his father after the meeting, the Knight announced that he did not want to marry her because of this fault. It is odd then that he is encouraging his daughters to act in a way that honorable men find disturbing. What is the wife to do? Agree with her husband before the daughters or dispute a position he himself has already condemned?

The wife is being set up, like Eve. But she recognizes what is being done to her. She picks up on her husband's contradiction, gently reminding him of his earlier rejection of the talkative young woman to support her argument that she does not want her daughters to engage in flirtation. She responds to her husband's challenge by watching out for her girls' honor, offering the only possible response a mother could offer within the context of a society that so severely chastized a girl's pleasure. Like Christine's wife, she is fiercely protective of her children and therefore plays according to the rules of the game, uttering what her husband and all men want to hear. True, the Knight chides his wife for being "moult malle et estrange et orgueilleuse en amours" [very bad and distant and arrogant in love].³⁵ And yet he is not serious, for he allows her to finish the debate with the last word, which is really his own. The girls must be careful never to let themselves be beholden to anyone else, because they will be too easily taken advantage of. It is a good thing to be aware of this social verity in advance, the Dame of La Tour-Landry concludes: "Si est bon de toutes avisier avant le coup."³⁶

The Knight puts his wife to the test in front of his daughters, pretending to try to convince her and his daughters with his arguments in favor of a pleasurable and harmless pastime. But the wife is too clever to fall for his bait. She is the ideal mother, applying to her husband's hypotheticals the lessons she has absorbed from him, all the while handling him without offending him.

The Maternal Isabeau

Isabeau of Bavaria (ca. 1371–1435) is the very epitome of the mediator mother Christine and the Knight describe, an intercessor kept from exercising any

³⁴ *Chevalier*, 247.

³⁵ *Chevalier*, 261.

³⁶ *Chevalier*, 265.

authentic control over her children as she struggled to supervise their upbringings. But unlike Christine's princess and the Knight's wife, she did not manage her difficult position effectively, although it is impossible to know whether this failure was due to lack of the requisite social skill or because the events that marked her life were simply beyond the control of any woman, no matter how diplomatically talented, to manage.

In any case, Isabeau's modern reputation as a mother is notorious. According to legends tenaciously maintained by popular historians as well as historians working in areas tangential to the Queen, like the Hundred Years War and Joan of Arc, she was more interested in satisfying her extravagant tastes than in caring for her children. Philippe Erlanger asserts:

Isabeau avait depuis longtemps épuisé les joies de la maternité. Une nouvelle grossesse ne pouvait la rejouir qu'en lui offrant le prétexte de se faire octroyer encore quelque bagatelle, un droit de péage, une abbaye, un château entouré de bonnes terres. La Bavaroise aimait les richesses.³⁷

For a long time Isabeau had taken no pleasure in maternity. She enjoyed a new pregnancy only because it offered her the pretext to give herself a present, the rights to a toll road, a new abbey, a chateau surrounded by good land. The Bavarian woman loved riches.

Furthermore, she is said to have fathered an illegitimate son with her husband's brother, Louis Duke of Orleans, a son who grew into Charles VII — the Charles VII led to Rheims by Joan of Arc. She is then supposed to have revealed the truth about her son's illegitimate paternity in the Treaty of Troyes of 1420 for the purpose of preventing his accession to the throne, thereby handing the kingdom of France over to the English King Henry V. Mary Gordon's biography of Joan of Arc expresses the popular view of the relationship between Isabeau and her son: "The complications of Isabeau's relationship with Charles [her husband, Charles VI], her disloyalty to her son and the kingdom of France, are perplexing to the point of incomprehensibility. . . a mother explicitly supporting her son's enemies and implicitly casting doubts not only on his legitimacy, but on her own sexual probity."³⁸

Historians focusing upon the Queen have insisted for over twenty years that the Treaty of Troyes says nothing at all about Charles's paternity and that neither the English nor the French public of the time believed that it did. Isabeau's promiscuity and disinheritance of her son as a bastard are fictions created around the time

³⁷ Philippe Erlanger, *Charles VII et son mystère* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), 2.

³⁸ Mary Gordon, *Joan of Arc: A Penguin Life* (New York: Viking, 2000), 34–35.

of her death for political purposes.³⁹ As I will show, Isabeau's contemporaries recognized the limits of her power and those on her side in the civil war that divided France of her time viewed her situation as mother forced against her son with sympathy. Many contemporary documents suggest that her maternal qualities were excellent, and no contemporary document implies anything else.⁴⁰ And yet the story of Isabeau as unfit mother continues to be passed along, despite the existence of numerous studies that caution against reading charges of monstrous motherhood and promiscuity uncritically. In what follows, I will attempt to account for this unwarranted impression, showing how evidence of Isabeau's affection for her children and her efforts to insure the best possible lives for them has been ignored in favor of a narrative produced by the irreconcilable demands placed upon the Queen as wife and mother.

Under ordinary circumstances, Isabeau would have spent her life supervising the education of the twelve children she bore, six boys and six girls, between the years of 1386 and 1407. But because beginning in 1392 her husband Charles VI suffered from increasingly prolonged periods of madness that continued throughout his entire adult life, she was forced to act out the role of mediator in a very public way. The King gave her authority to help govern the realm during his periods of insanity, but required that her decisions be approved by a council that included among others his uncle Philip Duke of Burgundy (who was replaced after his death in 1404 by his son, John the Fearless) and his brother Louis Duke of Orleans.⁴¹ But taking advantage of the King's illness to increase their power, the

³⁹ For rehabilitations of Isabeau see R. C. Famiglietti, *Royal Intrigue at the Court of Charles VI* (New York: AMS Press, 1986) and *Tales of the Marriage Bed from Medieval France (1300–1500)* (Providence, RI: Picardy Press, 1992). More recent are the works of Marie-Véronique Clin, *Isabeau de Bavière* (Paris: Perrin, 1999) and Philippe Delorme, *Isabeau de Bavière: Epouse de Charles V, Mère de Charles VII* (Paris: Flammarion, 2003). Rachel Gibbons offers a concise history of Isabeau's defamation in "Isabeau of Bavaria, Queen of France (1385–1422): The Creation of an Historical Villainess," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* series 6.6 (1996a): 51–73. Earlier Marina Warner had disputed the story of Charles VII's supposed illegitimacy in *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1981), 57–59. On that topic see also Charles T. Wood, *Joan of Arc and Richard III: Sex, Saints and Government in the Middle Ages* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 125–51, and Charles Autrand, *Charles VI: La Folie du roi* (Paris: Fayard, 1986), 588–89. For a re-evaluation of the Queen as mother see Yann Grandeau's "Les Enfants de Charles VI: essai sur la vie privée des princes et des princesses de la maison de France à la fin du moyen âge," *Bulletin philologique et historique* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1969): 809–32.

⁴⁰ See Grandeau's dismissal of the oft-quoted anecdote of the Religieux de Saint-Denis that Isabeau neglected her children. The Religieux, partisan of the Burgundians, picked up a rumor that was being spread by John the Fearless of Burgundy, "Les Enfants de Charles VI," 823.

⁴¹ Many of the ordinances relative to Isabeau are available in the *Ordonnances des rois de France de la troisième race*, 21 vols. (Paris: De l'Imprimerie nationale, 1723–1849). See for example the ordinance of April, 1403, spelling out that all decisions during the King's "absences" be made by majority rule, *Ordonnances*, vol. 8, 578.

King's uncle, Philip of Burgundy, and the King's brother, Louis of Orleans, fell into an escalating conflict. Viewing Isabeau as a peaceful and objective force, Charles charged the Queen with acting as their arbitrator.⁴² However, she had no means of enforcing the accords she helped to bring about between the warring Dukes. As modern historian Jacques d'Avout describes her peace efforts, they were "sans valeur, puisqu'il manque au sommet du bel édifice l'autorité continue, seule capable d'en faire respecter les dispositions" [useless, because continuous authority the top of the chain of command, necessary for enforcement, is lacking].⁴³ Contemporary observers, likewise aware of the uselessness of Isabeau's repeated interventions, suggested sterner measures than mediation. The Religieux of St. Denis writes that representatives from the University of Paris called upon the King to insist that the hatred between the dukes was implacable and that the only way out of the escalating violence was to create a new government run by wise men devoted to the public welfare. Although charged with maintaining peace, Isabeau was prevented from success by her lack of serious authority.

Isabeau's maternal role was as circumscribed as her political one. Here too she did not simply acquire duties by right; they were delegated to her by the King.⁴⁴ True, as a mother she was viewed as the person most inclined by nature to care for her children, and yet her role in their upbringing was strictly limited. A year after Charles's first bout of mental illness, in an ordinance of January, 1393, the King named Isabeau co-guardian of her children, including the Dauphin, Louis, the Duke of Guyenne.⁴⁵ In language that foreshadows that of Christine's *Trois Vertus*, the ordinance states that mothers are to be preferred above all other possible guardians, because their natural interest in their children's welfare is greater than that of any other relative: "la mere a greigneur et plus tendre amour à ses enfans, et a le cuer plus doulz et plus soigneux de les garder et nourrir amoureuement, que quelconque autre personne, tant leur soit prochaine linage, et quant à ce doit estre preferée à touz autres. . ." [the mother has a greater and more tender love for her children, and with a soft and caring heart takes care of and nourishes them

⁴² Printed in L. Douët-D'Arcq, *Choix de pieces inedites relatives au regne de Charles VI*, 2 vols. (Paris: Renouard, 1863), vol. 1, 227–39.

⁴³ Jacques d'Avout, *La Querelle des Armagnacs et des Bourguignons* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), 125–26.

⁴⁴ That the mother did not hold any automatic rights over her children was true of non-noble families as well. Even when widowed, the mother was not necessarily assigned guardianship of her children. See, for example, Julie Hardwick, *The Practice of Patriarchy: Gender and the Politics of Household Authority in Early Modern France* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 121.

⁴⁵ The ordinances do not tell a transparent story, however. It is not always known whether they were published or registered. Also, it is not always clear whether the actors involved were complicit. For example, Famiglietti argues that the ordinances of 1409 transferring Isabeau's guardianship of the Dauphin to John the Fearless should not be seen, as it generally has been, as a wresting of authority from the Queen, but as an act undertaken at her instigation, 82–83.

more lovingly than any other person, no matter how closely related, and for this reason, she is to be preferred above all others. . .].⁴⁶ But as Christine and the Knight of La Tour-Landry knew, women were subject to the higher authority of their husbands or male relatives, and therefore could not singly act as guardians for their children. Thus the ordinance goes on to qualify its promotion of mothers as guardians, stipulating that because women must follow the advice of their wise and powerful male relatives [dames doivent estre acompaignées et conseillées, des plus prochains parens d'elles et de leurs enfans, qui soient saiges et puissans . . .] [women should be accompanied and advised by the closest relations to them and to their children, who are wise and powerful]. Just as her position on the governing council was limited by the other members, Isabeau's maternal authority was subject to the agreement of Charles' male relations, the dukes of Berry, Burgundy, and Bourbon, as well as her own brother, Louis Duke of Bavaria. Moreover, to assist this group, a council of twelve, including three prelates, six nobles, and three clerics, were named.

The real limits of Isabeau's rights over her children are vividly demonstrated in an incident of August, 1405. The Dauphin, Louis of Guyenne, was a pawn in the power struggle between Louis Duke of Orleans and John the Fearless. The Dauphin resided with his mother, who cared for him in his day to day life. Fearing an attack by John the Fearless who was threatening to march upon Paris, Louis and Isabeau fled Paris for safety. But they realized that they would arouse suspicions if they departed with the Duke in tow. Thus Isabeau and Louis left the boy in the care of Isabeau's brother, Louis of Bavaria, with instructions to follow a day later. However, John the Fearless physically diverted the boy as he was on his way to join his mother. The vehement written protest of Louis of Orleans in response to John's intervention suggests how little Isabeau's authority counted when it presented an obstacle to his personal objectives: "Et nous merveillons et non sans cause," Louis fulminates, "quel pouvoir et quele auctorité avoit celui ou ceulx ce ont entrepris de fait d'oster à ma dicte dame le gouvernement de ses enfans que mon seigneur en la présence de nous tous lui avoit donné, et la priver de la veue d'iceulx, car plusieurs de nous sommes plus prouchains à pourveoir à la seureté de monseigneur de Guienne s'il y failloit pourveoir, que celui ou ceulx qui si hastiement s'i sont avancier" [And we wonder, and with good reason, by what power and authority he or those who undertook to wrest from my Lady the governance of her children, which my Lord had given to her in the presence of all of us, and to deprive her of the sight of them; for many of us are in a better position to guarantee the safety of Monseigneur of Guyenne if it needed to be guaranteed, than he or those who so hastily advanced upon him].⁴⁷

⁴⁶ See *Ordonnances*, vol. 7, 530.

⁴⁷ Douet-D'Arcq, *Choix de pieces inédites relatives*, vol. 1, 276.

Although restricted in her authority, Isabeau seems to have been an attentive mother who enjoyed life-long relationships with her children. She kept her children alongside her at the Hôtel Saint-Pol while they were small, where she could watch over them, as Christine de Pizan suggested a mother should do, and when she left Paris she often took them with her.⁴⁸ She had good reason to be concerned for her children's welfare, for they seem not to have been a healthy group, with the majority dying tragically young. She lost all but one of her six sons, and only two of her six daughters outlived her. Her first born, Charles, lived only three months. Her second son, also named Charles, lived for nearly ten years. Louis of Guyenne died in 1415, just short of 19. John of Touraine then became the Dauphin, but died in 1417. Philip, the youngest, died at birth. Only Charles (third of that name) lived to adulthood. Of her daughters, Katherine and Marie outlived their mother by just a few years, with the others dying in childhood or early adulthood. Ariès suggests that the probability that one's children would die young must have prevented parents from growing attached to them.⁴⁹ Was this true of Isabeau? The deep distress that she displayed at the death of her youngest son militates against the notion that medieval parents regarded their children as dispensable. Premature, Philip was born dead in 1407. The Queen's emotional disarray at this loss is poignantly recorded by the Religieux of St. Denis: "Infantis immatura mors materna viscera conturbavit, totumque tempus purgacionis regina continuavit in lamentis" [The premature death of the baby throw her into agony, and throughout the time of the delivery, the Queen continued to lament].⁵⁰ Afterwards, the Religieux continues, Louis of Orleans paid her frequent visits to comfort her.

How did she bear the loss of so many children, given her apparent emotional investment in them? One of Isabeau's outstanding characteristics was her piety.⁵¹ Her apparently intense devotion to the Virgin Mary may have given her strength to face the sorrow that was so much a part of medieval motherhood. Marcel Thibault reports that Isabeau received as a New Year's present from her husband a diptych with a picture of the Virgin Mary and a mirror adorning the outward facing panels. The payment for repairs to the diptych's hinges and the replacement of some of its pearls indicates that Isabeau made use of the gift. For Thibault, the gift seemed to appeal to two principal aspects of Isabeau's personality: devotion

⁴⁸ See Grandeau, "Les Enfants de Charles VI," 824.

⁴⁹ See Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* 39.

⁵⁰ *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denis contenant le regne de Charles VI, de 1380–1422*, ed. et trans. M. L. Bellaguet, 6 vols., (Paris: Crapelet, 1844; reprinted Editions du Comite des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 1994), vol. 5, 730.

⁵¹ See Rachel Gibbons, who cites Thibault in "The Piety of Isabeau of Bavaria," *Courts, Countries and the Capital in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Diana E. S. Dunn (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 205–24.

and vanity.⁵² It seems plausible, however, that for a pious young mother the juxtaposition of her own face with that of the Virgin's would have helped her to model herself after the holiest of mothers. Further evidence of Isabeau's relationship to the Virgin is offered by Auguste Vallet de Viriville who writes that Isabeau possessed "successivement et simultanément un nombre assez considerable de *Livres d'heures*" or Books of Hours.⁵³ Mary occupied a central position in these works, and a bereaved mother meditating upon the sorrows of Virgin would have found comfort there.

Other signs of Isabeau's affection include the fact that in 1399 when the plague struck Paris, she sent her children into the country for safety, but remained behind herself with the baby, who was too small to transport safely. While the children were away, she wrote letters to them; the accounts record a payment to "Jehannin le Charron" for delivering letters to the Dauphin.⁵⁴ The devotional books purchased by Isabeau for her children signal her interest in their moral and intellectual education.⁵⁵ Records of pets purchased—parrots for Isabelle, Jeanne and Michelle, and turtledoves for Katherine—birthday presents, toys, and clothes for special occasions also indicate maternal interest.⁵⁶ After the marriage of her daughter Jeanne to the Duke of Brittany, Jeanne came to stay with Isabeau for several months over the summer of 1415, and her daughter Katherine visited her mother while she was being held by the Burgundians leading up to the Treaty of Troyes.⁵⁷

Like other noble children, Isabeau's were separated from her at tender age. Her daughter Marie was sent to a convent at Poissy when she was less than five years old. But she was not abandoned. Marie-Véronique Clin explains:

Marie n'est cependant pas seule. Sa mere laisse auprès d'elle les dames d'honneur qui l'ont toujours servie, elle a aussi fait aménager sa cellule pour la rendre plus accueillante. En bonne mere soucieuse du confort de sa petite fille, elle veille à ce que, l'hiver, ses robes de novice soient fourrées d'hermine et non pas de vulgaire lapin, comme celles des autres religieuses, et elle ordonne que la pension de cent livres soit régulièrement versée. Isabeau demande aussi une dispense au pape pour que Marie puisse sortir de son couvent pour venir auprès d'elle à Saint-Pol lorsqu'elle le desirera.

⁵² See Gibbons, "Piety," 212. The reference is to Marcel Thibault, *Isabeau de Bavière: la Jeunesse* (Paris: Perrin et cie, 1903), 170.

⁵³ Auguste Vallet de Viriville, "La Bibliothèque d'Isabeau de Bavière," *Bulletin du Bibliophile* 14 (188): 663–87; here 669.

⁵⁴ Grandeau, "Les Enfants de Charles VI," 824.

⁵⁵ There are detailed in Vallet de Viriville, 668–69.

⁵⁶ Gibbons, "Mannequin," 390. See also Grandeau, "Les Enfants de Charles VI," 826–30, for descriptions of the royal children's wardrobes.

⁵⁷ Gibbons, "Creation of a Historical Villainess," 58.

La religieuse reste en relation épistolaire avec sa mere, ses frères, et ses soeurs, ces derniers ne l'oublient jamais dans leurs presents d'étreennes.

But Marie was not abandoned. Her mother left with her the same ladies of honor who had always served her, and she also had the girl's cell made as comfortable as possible. As a good mother who cared about her daughter's comfort, she made sure that the girl's novice robes were lined with ermine and not ordinary rabbit, like those of the other nuns, and she arranged for a pension of one hundred "livres" to be paid regularly. Isabeau also requested a papal dispensation to allow Marie to leave the convent to visit her mother at Saint-Pol whenever she wished. The nun communicated by letter with her mother, her brothers, and her sisters, who never forgot to send her New Year's gifts.

Marie was not alone, however. Her mother left with her the ladies of honor who had always served her, and she arranged for her room to be as comfortable as possible. As a good mother concerned for her daughter, she made sure that in winter, her daughter's novice robes were lined with ermine, rather than plain rabbit, like those of the other sisters, and she ordered an income of 100 livres to be paid regularly. Isabeau also requested a papal dispensation so that Marie could leave the convent to join the family at the Hotel St. Paul when she wished. The young sister corresponded regularly with her family, and they never forgot her in their New Years' gifts.⁵⁸

Her daughter Isabelle was sent off to become the Queen of Richard II of England at nine. Froissart reports that the Queen was living in the Hôtel St. Pol with her children when she was requested by English ambassadors to introduce them to her daughter, Isabelle, which she did. Isabelle was very well educated and mannered ("endocrinée") for her age, and the ambassadors found her delightful. Asked whether she would like to be the queen of England, Isabelle responded: "Se il plaist à Dieu et à monseigneur mon père que je soye royne d'Angleterre, je le verray volentiers, car on m'a bien dit que je seroie une grande dame" [If it pleases God and monsieur my father that I be queen of England, I would like it very much, because I have been told that I would be a great lady].⁵⁹ According to Froissart, Isabeau was overjoyed at the response of her daughter, as were all those looking on. After the little Isabelle departed, she was not forgotten. When Richard II was murdered and the girl herself held as a virtual prisoner by the new king, Henry IV, Charles and Isabeau suffered intense anxiety as they negotiated for her return. A series of documents related to the event describe how ambassadors were instructed to assure the girl that her rescue was underway and to urge her not to agree to any marriage plans Henry IV might propose to her. In the meantime, if

⁵⁸ Marie-Véronique Clin, *Isabeau de Bavière* (Paris: Perrin, 1999), 125.

⁵⁹ Jean Froissart, *Oeuvres de Froissart*, ed. Joseph Kervyn de Lettenhove, 25 vols. (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1967), vol. 15, 186.

they could speak to the girl alone, they were to tell her how much she was missed and ask her to do all she could to come home: "Se ilz peuvent parler a elle à part, lui diront que le Roy et la Royne la désirent moult veoir, et que elle mette la diligence que ele pourra à ce que tost puist retourner devers eulx" [If they can speak to her alone, they will tell her that the King and the Queen desire greatly to see her, and that she should do all she can to see that she return quickly].⁶⁰ The Religieux of St. Denis describes the joy of the parents when their most beloved daughter ("dilectissimam filiam") returned safely. Her mother took charge of her again ("genetrix gubernadam recipiens") and although Isabelle's status in her mother's household was necessarily less what she had enjoyed as the Queen of England, Isabeau surrounded the girl with ladies who were even nobler than those who had surrounded her before her departure.⁶¹ Isabeau arranged politically useful marriages for her own children. Still, it is clear that her emotional bonds with them were strong.

Perhaps the clearest sign that Isabeau was deeply attached to her children even though she sent them early into different households is her reaction to the removal of her son John of Touraine to his new in-laws' home just after his wedding. The Religieux of St. Denis describes her dismay at learning that John was to be taken from her care and raised in the home of his new wife in Hainaut. After the wedding festival, the Religieux reports, the Countess of Hainaut wanted to take the Duke of Touraine with her. The Queen indicated her extreme opposition. The two women argued. But Isabeau could not prevent John's departure; it had been written into the marriage treaty that the Duke was to be raised in Hainaut by his in-laws. It appears that the King was suffering one of his periods of madness at the time of the wedding, for the Religieux notes that John left with his in-laws, but that when the Count of Hainault learned that the King was healthy once again, he returned to court to request that John's education be left in his hands definitively.⁶² Unlike the Queen, the King was happy to accede to the demand, and naturally his will took precedence over hers. The children's lives were ultimately in the hands of their father, not their mother.

But it was the fostering of her youngest surviving son, Charles—later Charles VII of France—that eventually caused Isabeau the greatest heartache.⁶³ In

⁶⁰ Douet-D'Arcq, *Choix de pieces inedites relatives* vol. 1, 194.

⁶¹ Religieux de St. Denis, *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denis* vol. 4, 6.

⁶² Religieux de St. Denis, *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denis* vol. 5, 393–95.

⁶³ Once again Philippe Erlanger offers a completely unsubstantiated assessment of Isabeau's maternal emotions, describing her reaction to Charles's departure in a way suggestive of how modern readers have misunderstood medieval motherhood. "Cet enfant s'étiolait dans la grande ville, pleine de menaces, de bruit, d'odeurs fétides. Le calme des bords de Loire l'apaiserait, lui donnerait des forces. Isabeau acquiesça, indifférente. Elle avait déjà livré de la même façon Jean de Touraine au comte de Hainaut, son beau-père" (27).

December, 1413, the ten-year-old Charles was married to Marie, daughter of the Duke of Anjou. Yolande Duchess of Anjou took the two children with her to Anjou, in February, 1414, most likely to keep them out of peril.⁶⁴ The winter of 1414 was a particularly dangerous time in Paris, with John the Fearless menacing the capital with his army. The Duke and Duchess of Anjou were firmly of the Armagnac party, opposed to John and the Burgundians, the party on behalf of whom Isabeau would eventually sign the Treaty of Troyes. The young Charles, influenced by his wife's family, became a central figure in the Armagnac party, supported financially and militarily by his mother-in-law. The system of fostering set Isabeau and her son on opposite sides of the civil war.

How did the myth of the monstrous mother who disinherited her youngest son as a bastard develop around a devotee of the Virgin who seems so clearly to have loved her children? To answer this question it is necessary to return to the entry of John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy, onto the political stage, because it is for plotting the assassination of this powerful and influential figure that Charles VII was disinherited by his father.

During the years of unrest brought on by the struggle for power among Charles VI's relatives, Isabeau allied herself first with one and then with the other of the Dukes, depending upon who happened to be posing the greater threat to her family. She has been criticized as opportunistic for this. One historian claims that her various alliances profited her personally: "Benefiting from the upheavals, the opportunistic Isabeau increased her wealth and power but preferred a life of entertainment and celebration to the establishment of political domination. According to the drift of the moment, she allied herself with whomever seemed likely to triumph: first her brother-in-law Duke Louis of Orleans, and after his assassination, his murderer Duke John the Fearless of Burgundy."⁶⁵ However, what has been seen as political opportunism can better be regarded as a sign of maternal concern: the Queen was attempting to protect the Dauphin. She realistically feared for her own life and for that of her son after Louis's assassination. In finally allying herself with John in a treaty of November 11, 1409, she was moving from one threatening situation into what she perceived to be a less threatening one.⁶⁶ Her fear grew when on March 8, 1408, Jean Petit presented a discourse at the Hôtel Saint-Pol, justifying John the Fearless's act. Three days later,

⁶⁴ In her biography of Charles of Orleans Enid McLeod asserts without proof or reference that Yolande served as a surrogate mother to Charles, because "his own mother Isabeau made no secret of her dislike for him." *Charles of Orleans: Prince and Poet* (New York: Viking Press, 1969), 199.

⁶⁵ Andre Poulet, "Capetian Women and the Regency: The Genesis of a Vocation," *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John Carmi Parsons (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 93–116; here 115.

⁶⁶ See Jean Verdon, *Isabeau de Bavière: La Mal-Aimée* (Paris: Tallandier, 1981), 160–61; Vaughan, 79–82. Famiglietti, however, disputes the common assumption that Isabeau was motivated by intimidation, 80–81.

Isabeau fled Paris with the Dauphin, holing up with him at her citadelle in Melun.⁶⁷ The Religieux de Saint Denis reports that she ordered the citadelle guarded night and day.⁶⁸ The execution of John of Montaigu, *grand maitre* in charge of the King's household, on October 17, 1409, at the instigation of John the Fearless and despite the vigorous interventions of Isabeau, frightened her to the point that she decided to join forces with John. The suggestion that she signed on with John for personal gain is untenable, for he lacked money himself: on September, 1410, she lent him 7,000 golden francs.⁶⁹

Isabeau and the Dauphin broke with John and allied herself with Charles of Orleans of the Armagnac party on January 29, 1414, after the Cabochian Revolt. Blaming John for the catastrophic uprising, the royal family ordered him to desist from any action harmful to the people of France. John, nonetheless, descended upon Paris with his army. In December of 1416, the Dauphin died, followed the next year by his brother, John of Touraine. This left the 14-year-old Charles, who was supported by the Armagnacs. In 1419, the Armagnacs exiled Isabeau to Tours, under the pretext of the loose morality of her court at Vincennes, but in fact in an attempt to rid themselves of her influence. From her captivity in Tours she called upon John the Fearless for deliverance, which he provided. In a horrific massacre in Paris in 1418, the Burgundians seized control of the King from the Armagnacs, killing their leader, Bernard VII. Finally, John the Fearless was assassinated by partisans of the Dauphin Charles.

For this crime, which aggravated an already chaotic political situation, Charles VI—not Isabeau—disinherited his son, an act formalized in the Treaty of Troyes in May, 1420. Indisposed on the day of the signing, Charles was represented by the Queen. Thus the act of disinheriting her son has been incorrectly attributed to Isabeau and held against her as a sign of her monstrous motherhood.⁷⁰ Philip the Good, son and successor of John the Fearless, persuaded King Charles to conclude the Treaty of Troyes with the English, an agreement by which the Dauphin was disinherited for his part in the parricide, and Henry V—to be married to Charles and Isabeau's daughter, Katherine—named heir to the throne. Isabeau's opinion of the matter is not known.⁷¹ But whatever motives have been attributed to her by modern readers, her contemporary allies saw both her and the King as victims of

⁶⁷ See Verdon, *Isabeau de Baviere*, 151; d'Avout, *La Querelle des Armagnacs*, 100.

⁶⁸ Religieux de Saint Denis, *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys* vol. 3, 767.

⁶⁹ See Verdon, p. 162, footnote 29. According to Verdon, the transaction is recorded in the Archives Côte-d'Or, B 1562, fol. 107.

⁷⁰ See the Religieux de St. Denis, *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. 6, 382–84, who describes the King's displeasure and the public censures of Charles's actions.

⁷¹ Even Philip did not seek the treaty. His position was that it was the "moindre mal." Recognizing that Henry would take over France with or without his consent, he decided to back the English and retain his position of influence. See Autrand, *Charles VI*, 584–86.

Philip, who negotiated the terms with Henry V. The *Réponse d'un bon et loyal François*, written in the winter of 1420, in reaction to peace accord concluded between Philip and Henry V in December, 1419, at Arras, thus just prior to the signing of the Treaty of Troyes in May of 1420, records a contemporary view of the Queen as a dupe of the Burgundians, tricked like the King and the people of France by the language of the treaty, which was Latin.

iii. Considérez la premiere malice, car ce traicties ilz ont fait et formé en latin contre le commun usage des tratietiez qui souloient ester faiz entre François et Anglois; et ce ont fait afin que plus legierement et couvertement puissent estre induiz ceulx qui n'entendront (point le) latin a l'accorder, comme le roy, la royne, madame Katherine et la plus grant partie des nobles, bourgeois et autres du royaume, et car le latin puet avoir plus divers entendemens par equivocation que le François.

iii. Consider the first trick, for they made and formed the treaty in Latin, against the common usage of treaties between the French and the English; and they did this because those who do not understand Latin can be more easily and covertly persuaded, like the King, the Queen, and Madame Katherine and the greatest part of the nobles, bourgeois, and others of the kingdom, for Latin is more susceptible to equivocation than French.⁷²

The *Répons d'un bon et loyal François* goes on to make the point that Isabeau and Katherine were being held against their will by the Burgundians men at arms: "viii. Considérez en quelle liberté et franchise ont esté et sont la royne et sa fille, madame Katherine, qui se sont voulu partir de Troyes, la ou elles estoient comme l'en dit, mais on ne l'a pas souffert jusques a tant que on les ait mises es mains des anciens ennemis du roy et du royaume et d'elles mesmes, par espoventement et force de gens d'armes" [viii. Consider whether the Queen and her daughter, Madame Katherine, have been or are free; they wanted to leave Troyes, where they were, as they say, but this was not permitted; they were delivered into the hands of the ancient enemies of the King and the kingdom and of themselves, by terror and the force of men at arms].⁷³

The story of Isabeau as an unnatural mother who sold her son's rights to maintain her own position claims not only that her alliance with the Burgundians was motivated by opportunism, but that with the Treaty of Troyes she denied the paternity of Charles to invalidate his claims to the throne with the goal of strengthening her own position within the Burgundian network. Although historians have recognized that the Treaty of Troyes implies nothing about the paternity of Charles VII, she continues to be blamed for signing it at all. It should be noted, however, that Isabeau and her son were not enemies even after the

⁷² In Nicole Pons, *L'Honneur de la Couronne de France: Quatre libelles contre les Anglais* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1990), 123.

⁷³ *Repons*, 124.

assassination of John the Fearless. In late December of 1419, Isabeau was still in communication with him, because a letter, although lost today, elicited a warm response from him that does exist.⁷⁴

The notion that Isabeau disinherited her son came into existence only after her death, based upon a mistranslation of a common expression used in the treaty, "so-called" ("soi-disant"). The context is as follows: "[C]onsiderz les orribles et enormes crimes et deliz perpetrez oudit Royaume de france par Charles soy disant daulphin de viennois, il est accorde que nous ne nostre filz le Roy henry ne aussi nostre treschier filx phelippe duc de Bourgogne ne traicterons aucunement de paix our de concorde avecques ledit Charles, ne ferons our ferons traictier se non du conseil et assentement de tous et chascun de nous trois, et des troiz estas de deux Royaumes . . ." [Considering the horrible and enormous crimes perpetrated upon the Kingdom of France by Charles, the so-called dauphin of Vienne, it has been agreed that neither ourselves nor our son the King Henry nor our very dear son Philip the Duke of Burgundy will make any peace treaties with said Charles, nor will we make or have made any except with the council and agreement of all three of us and the three estates of our two Kingdoms].⁷⁵ Construing "soi-disant" as a veiled reference to Charles's uncertain paternity, historians wove the insult into the larger narrative of degraded motherhood. But "soi-disant" was a standard insult, challenging the bearer of a title's fitness for the title. Employed in letters between Charles of Orleans and John the Fearless, the insult had a long history.⁷⁶

Conclusion

Recent criticism concerning medieval women has stressed their ability to influence indirectly. Certainly mediation was a powerful tool by which some women were

⁷⁴ See E. Deprez, "Un essai d'union nationale à la veille du traité de Troyes (1419)," *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes* 99 (1938): 343–53.

⁷⁵ Cited in Gibbons, "Creation of an Historical Villainess," 70.

⁷⁶ The Religieux of St. Denis uses the expression to refer to the fact that Charles VII has been disinherited; hence he is the "so-called" Dauphin. After the assassination of John the Fearless a flurry of letters spread the news of the act and interpretations of it. "Concludebatur in fine litterarum quod cum summa displicencia rex dalfini mores indisciplinatos, estoper iniquos consultores seducti, ad memoriam reducens, ipsum ab omni dignitatis titulo privandum merito decernebat, prohibens ne quis deinceps dalfinum ducem vel comitem, sed Karolum male consultum sede Francia vocantem nominaret" [It was concluded at the end of the letters that the King regarded with an intense displeasure the uncontrolled morals of the Dauphin, even though he blamed them on the advice of bad advisors, and that because of this he would deprive the Dauphin of his dignities, forbidding him any other title than Charles the Badly Advised, "so-called" of France], *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denis*, vol 6, 886. On "soi-disant" as an insult see Gibbons, "Creation of an Historical Villainess," 70. See also Autrand, *Charles VI*, 588–89.

able to exercise considerable power.⁷⁷ But the very real limitations of mediation should not be ignored. Even as effective a mediator as Honor Lisle was subject to clear boundaries. As Barbara A. Hanawalt describes Honor's position as mediating wife and mother,

Hers was a subordinate position in the male world of politics. It was her duty to be circumspect and to accept male dominance. She knew the limit of her power, and she sometimes mentioned her inferior position as a woman. Her contemporaries were concerned that her advice was so frequently forthcoming. . . .⁷⁸

As Elisabeth Badinter notes in her study of maternal love in *ancien régime* France, "paternal power had to be maintained at all costs. Societal pressure in this direction was so great that very little else entered into it."⁷⁹

But far from considering the limitations Isabeau's society put upon her attempts to mediate, both as Queen and mother, modern readers have condemned her for events that were beyond her capacity to correct. Throughout her maternal career, she attempted to fulfill the duties assigned her and was regularly prevented from doing so. The inevitable business of arranging marriages put her young son Charles into a household that eventually found itself on the opposing side from Isabeau in the civil war. Clearly this was not an outcome she would have wished. Indeed, the marriage was arranged in the first place to defuse some of the threat posed by John the Fearless. And yet despite the dreadful situation, Isabeau seems to have been in contact with her adolescent son only months before the Treaty of Troyes.

Isabeau's maternal love finds abundant testimony. But what can her case offer to a re-consideration of Ariès's claim that the medieval world had no concept of childhood? It is important to recognize that Ariès almost certainly would not have made the claim in the terms he used had he been steeped in the recent critical idiom that recognizes that historical examination focuses upon constructions rather than fixed cultural phenomena. Medieval childhood was nothing like its modern counterpart. Children, including Isabeau's, regularly shouldered familial responsibilities unthinkable today. Still, as Ariès undoubtedly recognized, children were not simply small adults. Their limitations were acknowledged—their childhood was seen as a period of training for what lay ahead. For example, fearing that he might die of his mental illness, Charles VI made arrangements for

⁷⁷ See for example the collection of essays on queenship *Women and Sovereignty*, ed. Louise Olga Fradenburg.

⁷⁸ Barbara A. Hanawalt, "Lady Honor Lisle's Networks of Influence," *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1988), 188–212; here 206.

⁷⁹ Elisabeth Badinter, *The Myth of Motherhood: An Historical View of the Maternal Instinct* (London: Souvenir Press, 1981), 22.

the realm to be governed in the case of his death. Because he recognized that his young son was incapable of assuming the throne, he assigned a regent, his brother Louis (and later John the Fearless), to guide the boy through his majority. Although noble children were married early to further their family's fortunes, they did not consummate their marriages before the ages of about 12 for girls and 14 for boys. Thus Isabelle, little Queen of England, remained a child although a "great lady." Grandeau notes that the girl's trousseau included dolls.⁸⁰ Before reaching majority, she would have played at being queen, learning from her entourage how to conduct herself.

As for the emotional attachment mothers experienced for the young offspring they were preparing to take on adult responsibilities, Isabeau's case demonstrates with pathetic clarity how the limitations to which she was subject as a woman shaped her maternal activity and how the opinion of modern audiences toward the Queen has been formed by a failure to give these limitations their full weight. Part of a system whose primary goal was the perpetuation of the families that controlled it, mothers were necessarily complicitous. Like Griselda, they were exhorted to obey. Like the Virgin Mary, they were required to stand by silently while their children were put into circulation. And yet Isabeau's story demonstrates that mothers might be torn apart over their required complicity. Her biography throws into relief the contradictory medieval conception of motherhood as a role that demanded a wife and mother's intervention on behalf of a masculine social system that was too flawed and too violent to survive, but that simultaneously refused to heed that intervention. Isabeau, like other women of her age, was asked to juggle paradoxical requirements. Medieval mothers, both historical and fictitious, must be considered in this context, admired when they enjoy success and regarded with compassion when they do not. Subject to powers they could not control, mediator mothers occupied a truly ambivalent role, always just on the verge of turning from an ideal into a Griselda-like villainess.

⁸⁰ Grandeau, "Les Enfants de Charles VI," 833.

Marilyn Sandidge
(Westfield State College)

Changing Contexts of Infanticide in Medieval English Texts

Although instances of infanticide are rarely recorded in the historical and legal documents of the time, infanticide does appear with regularity in the literature of medieval England. Since the crime is by its nature secretive and easily hidden, we can understand why early public records do not provide much information about it. If we examine the literary contexts in which infanticide is used, however, we can flesh out the dynamics between the historical record in medieval England and the popular culture's concept of the practice as reflected in the literature. Although Philippe Ariès states that European "indifference towards a too fragile childhood is not really very far removed from the callousness of the Roman or Chinese societies which practiced the exposure of new-born children," this claim is not supported by the legal records or the literature of medieval England.¹

Identifying acts of infanticide in medieval England is not a simple task. Since the first use of the word "infanticide" in the English language dates to the seventeenth century, we cannot simply look for this term or even a synonym in the records. In the Latin documents, the act is usually called "homicide," and the extant English-language records use either Old English compounds for child murders, "formyrthrian" or "bearnmyrdhran," or the term describing the frequent way infants were suffocated, "overlaying."² In many of the records, it is difficult to distinguish between accidental and intentional deaths because of the terminology used. Not even the classical period's term "expositio" is as clear as historians such as Ariès would have us think. Stephen Post, building on an argument made by

¹ Phillipe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. From the French by Robert Baldick (1960; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 39.

² R[ichard] H. Helmholz, "Infanticide in the Province of Canterbury During the Fifteenth Century," *History of Childhood Quarterly* 2, 3 (Winter 1975): 379–390; here 381; and Graham D. Caie, "Infanticide in an Eleventh-Century Old English Homily," *Notes and Queries* 45, 3 (Sept. 1998): 275–276; here 275.

John Boswell, argues that reading "expositio" to mean abandonment leading to death is a misunderstanding of the term. "Expositio" should be interpreted instead as a "putting out." These Roman children were expected to be taken in by someone, whether by wealthy Roman women avoiding pregnancy or by couples without children, and the Roman "lacteria" became the place to leave a child a parent was unable or unwilling to care for.³

Even in our modern sense of "infanticide" there is little agreement about the ages of the children being referred to. In the scholarship discussing the crime during the medieval and early modern periods, the cases called "infanticides" range from unborn fetuses to nine-year-old children.⁴ For this study, however, infanticide will be limited to the deaths of those we now call "infants" in English, children around the age of one year or younger.

Up until the early modern period, the crime we call "infanticide" in Europe came under the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts, not the royal courts. Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury (668–690), says child murder equals homicide and prescribes a fifteen-year penance, unless the mother is poor. Then the penance would drop to seven years. In this earliest mention in English church law, then, the mother's punishment differs depending on the circumstances surrounding the killing. An eighth century penitential attributed to Bede even more clearly states that the penance should be determined by whether the woman kills the child because she cannot support it or whether she is a harlot concealing her wickedness.⁵ These earliest documents assume that poverty or illegitimacy is the motivation behind infanticide and that poverty should be taken into account when sentencing the killer, assumed to be the mother, for the crime.

One of the earliest mentions of the crime in English outside of church penitential documents comes in a Wulfstanian homily, Homily 29, in a manuscript dating from the eleventh century, Oxford, Bodleian Hatton 113, fols. 66–73. In a discussion of Judgment Day based on Bede's *De Die Iudicii*, the homilist has added a section describing the scene on Judgment Day. There, he declares, every child

³ John Eastburn Boswell, "Expositio and Oblatio: The Abandonment of Children and the Ancient and Medieval Family," *The American Historical Review* 89,1 (February 1984): 10–33, cited in Stephen Post, "History, Infanticide, and Imperiled Newborns," *The Hastings Center Report*, 18, 4 (1988): 14–18; here 15.

⁴ In their study, Peter C. Hoffer and N. E. H. Hull, *Murdering Mothers: Infanticide in England and New England 1558–1803* (New York: New York University Press, 1981), use "infanticide" to describe the death of a child as old as 9 years, and Maria Piers, *Infanticide* (New York: Norton & Co., Inc., 1978) also includes the killing of older children in her study of infanticide.

⁵ Barbara A. Kellum, "Infanticide in England in the Later Middle Ages," *History of Childhood Quarterly* 1 (1974): 367–388; here 369.

will reveal who murdered it. This homily promises that an infant will reappear to accuse its killer in the most important court of all on Judgment Day. Graham Caie has argued based on the linguistic evidence of the wording that the passage does refer to infanticide, and the suggestion that the killing had been hidden earlier lends support to this view.⁶ Presumably, anyone in the priest's audience who had committed such an act would be moved to ask for forgiveness and others would be warned against the act. As this is the only addition the writer makes to the text about Judgment Day, he must have felt a compelling need to make a statement about this crime. Caie suggests that the canonical decree of 906, compiled by Regino of Prüm, urging priests to announce publicly that mothers who have illegitimate children should leave them at the church door instead of killing them, could have been a prime influence on Wulfstan's work.⁷ Far from being unimportant, the dead infant in this homily will follow its killer into eternal life.

The second literary work containing infanticide, a pious tale about St. Gregory's mother, also illustrates the early assumption that infanticide belongs to the world of unwed mothers. Dating the English tale about Pope Gregory's mother, or "Trentalle Sancti Gregorii," is complicated and uncertain. Although three of the five versions come from a common source probably written between 1300 and 1350, critics believe that its source is based on an earlier text, and a second version, found in two manuscripts, is also difficult to date because it is perhaps written from oral transmission.⁸ The tale is certainly earlier than the late thirteenth century, and it reflects a simple, quite didactic use of infanticide in the literature.

In the first version of the tale, although Pope Gregory's mother was regarded as pure and sure of residence in Heaven, she secretly had borne a child out of wedlock and then murdered it. Not confessing, she is sent to Hell when she dies. She appears at night to Gregory in monstrous form, confesses her case and its cause, and declares she can be freed only if three masses are said for her on each of the ten chief feasts of the year. After Gregory has said the masses for a year, his mother appears to him in such a lovely form that he takes her for the Virgin, and an angel carries her off to Heaven. The piece ends with exhortation and instruction on attending masses. In the second version of the tale, Gregory withstands temptations to draw him away from the final masses on the Nativity of Mary.⁹ In both versions of this didactic work, infanticide after a secret, illegitimate birth is

⁶ Caie, "Infanticide," 275–76.

⁷ Caie, "Infanticide," 276, note 5.

⁸ John Edwin Wells, *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050–1400* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1916), 172–73.

⁹ The plot is taken from Wells, *Manual*, 172–73.

used to show a horrible sin that can be forgiven by God if worshipers follow their priests' direction. Since this is a saint's mother, the audience also sees that no one has escaped committing sinful acts, and we can infer that the crime of infanticide resulting from an unmarried woman trying to hide her sin is not unfamiliar to members of the audience. The work certainly makes it clear that this society considered the crime a wicked offense.

Incest precedes infanticide in many of the Roman stories that English authors used for their sources in the early Middle Ages. Although the plots may be more complicated, the messages are the same: come to church, repent and be saved, as the 1215 Fourth Lateran Council instructs. In an exemplum from an English version of the *Gesta Romanorum*, Chapter Thirteen, "De Amore Inordinato," an emperor impregnates his daughter; years later the issue of this union, a son, sleeps with her, his mother. She again gets pregnant and kills their infant, which is both her child and grandchild. Later she confesses and dies a saved woman.¹⁰ Another story taken from an early English manuscript of the *Gesta Romanorum* has a beautiful young woman who is impregnated by her father break the baby's neck and kill her own mother when her mother finds the pair together. After the father repents, the daughter murders him for his wealth. After moving to another city, she lives riotously until she happens to enter a church one day. The sermon moves her to confess, and she drops dead on the spot. The audience is told by an angel that she is now in Heaven—as anyone who has sinned will be if he or she confesses.¹¹ These infanticides resulting from incest and the murders that follow in these bizarre plots illustrate the most vicious, reprehensible acts people may be caught up in and emphasize, in course of time, the promise of Christ's unfailing forgiveness. The daughter in the last work is forgiven even after committing one horrible sin after another, which includes killing both of her parents and her incestuous newborn.

The acts of infanticide in these early works also link female sexuality to a terrible crime, murder. In these texts, young unmarried women end up pregnant, and even though in the last two examples the fathers initiate the incest, the attention is focused on the daughters' sexuality and consequent actions. Their sexuality then leads to other horrible crimes, patricide and matricide as well as infanticide. Given the misogynist writings by prominent medieval church authors such as St. Jerome,

¹⁰ Elizabeth Archibald, "'The Appalling Dangers of Family Life': Incest in Medieval Literature," *Medieval Family Roles: A Book of Essays*, ed. Cathy Jorgensen Itnyre (New York and London: Garland Press, 1966), 157–171; here 161.

¹¹ Plot taken from Wells, *Manual*, 176. The fifteenth-century play fragment entitled *Dux Moraud* seems to tell a similar story.

it is not surprising that clerical writers choose infanticide to illustrate sin. As daughters of Eve, the female characters attract male attention, and many sinful acts follow.

As the English church expanded its discussion of infanticide in later legal works, especially in the penitential manuals, other circumstances, such as unintentional negligence, a mother's refusal to nurse after the birth of a child, and mistreatment of a wife that leads to a miscarriage, emerge.¹² The simple assumption that newborns die because unmarried women kill them must not have seemed accurate or adequate anymore. Canon law in England did not recognize a distinction for purposes of prosecution between negligent homicide of infants and intentional homicide, though again the circumstances of the death could affect the severity of the penance given. As the term "overlaying" suggests, parents could even be accused of murdering a child by accidentally suffocating it during the night in bed, and parish priests preached against placing a baby to sleep in the parents' bed.¹³ In R. H. Helmholz's study of infanticide in the Province of Canterbury during the fifteenth century, suffocation, usually in bed, accounts for the largest number of infant deaths.¹⁴

Ultimately derived from Statius's *Thebaid*, A.D. 50, the only work containing a negligent infanticide I found is in the English *Siege of Thebes*, written by Lydgate between 1420 and 1422. Although it makes up a very small part of the story, the infanticide is interesting. The noble woman Hypsipyle refuses to kill her father as the other daughters on Lemnos do to gain power in the women's rebellion. She flees and is made a nurse to a noble baby. The infant dies from a snakebite when she leaves him sleeping to lead a thirsty army to water. Even though she didn't intend harm, the boy's death is considered a homicide.¹⁵ Certainly the circumstances behind this death are more complicated than in the earlier works. Hypsipyle's actions seem laudable—not killing her father and providing thirsty men with water are good acts. The negligent homicide, however, must point to some wrong course of action on her part. Since the story contrasts a setting of insurrection and war against a domestic scene of caring for an infant, we are meant to see the neglect of the infant to help an army as an indictment against the

¹² Kellum, "Infanticide," 370; Helmholz, "Infanticide," 381.

¹³ Barbara Hanawalt, *Crime and Conflict in English Communities 1300–1348* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 155.

¹⁴ Helmholz, "Infanticide," 381.

¹⁵ Anna Roberts, "The 'Homicidal Women' Stories in the Roman de Thebes, the Brut Chronicles, and Deschamps's 'Ballade 285,'" *Domestic Violence in Medieval Texts*, eds. Eve Salisbury, Georgiana Donavin, and Merrall Llewelyn Price (Gainesville, Tallahassee, et al.: University Press of Florida, 2002), 205–222; here 208.

woman's political actions. As Roberts has pointed out, she should not have acted autonomously or politically.¹⁶ With neither secrecy nor female sexuality involved in this infanticide, the work highlights a complex public world where the best course of action is no longer clear.

In the next work, the romance *Athelston*, written around 1350, domestic violence growing out of jealousy and uncontrolled rage lead to infanticide of an unborn child. In a complex plot, the work explores human character traits in a world where divine justice, the Catholic Church's authority, and the English king's powers are set against each other. When Athelstan becomes King of England, he gives three men to whom he has sworn brotherhood powerful positions as the Archbishop of Canterbury, as the Earl of Dover, and as the Earl of Stane, and Stane also becomes the husband to his sister. Out of jealousy, Dover falsely accuses Stane and his wife of plotting against the king. Enraged, Athelstan imprisons Stane and his family. When the Queen intercedes for them, Athelstan kicks her and kills their unborn child. Stane is shown to be innocent through an ordeal and Dover, failing at his ordeal, is executed. When Stane's wife gives birth to a son, the King names him, the future Saint Edmund, his heir to keep the family line alive.¹⁷ The importance of an heir to noble families and to the growing middle class families at this time is highlighted by the death of the fetus, and the ugly consequences of domestic violence are sharply exposed. Although divine justice triumphs at the end for many in the plot, the unborn infant and the Queen do not join in the resolution. The killer, the father this time, suffers setbacks but eventually regains his kingdom and an heir who shares his bloodline. The character who falsely accuses another of plotting against the king is executed, but the character who causes the death of his own child is not punished. In none of these later works are those who kill the infants admonished to seek forgiveness from Christ. Instead, an infanticide stands at the center of power struggles between church and state, issues of personal loyalty, questions of inheritance, and realities of family violence.

Since compurgation, the swearing of one's own oath of innocence and testimony from neighbors that the oath is true, was the usual way to prove innocence in the ecclesiastical courts during the medieval period, the judgment essentially depended upon the community's beliefs about the accused and his or her circumstances. According to a case found in Naomi D. Hurnard's *The King's Pardon for Homicide before 1307 A. D.*, cited by Kellum, only Sabina de Coetingle, who claimed that her baby had been born stillborn and that she had been insane as well

¹⁶ Roberts, "Homicidal Women," 208.

¹⁷ "Athelston," *Four Romances of England*, eds. Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake, and Eve Salisbury. TEAMS Middle English Texts Series (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999), 349–84.

at the time, was found guilty of infanticide while sane and was sentenced to be burned.¹⁸ Hurnard speculates that the community's feelings about her may account for the finding since the judgment and the punishment are radically different from others' in the records.¹⁹ Undergoing penance as punishment in England, still the usual punishment up until the Reformation, emphasizes the community's role in the handling of the crime. Except in the one case cited above, public humiliation of the guilty person was considered adequate punishment. A late fourteenth-century text called *Instructions for Parish Priests* includes overlaying a child in a list of venial sins that also included quarreling with one's wife.²⁰ As in cases of sexual offences like fornication and adultery, punishment for infanticide was handled as "a public sin of wrongful conduct," not as the secular act of homicide. R. H. Helmholz describes, for example, the punishment of Joan Rose in 1470. Convicted of killing her son, she had to wear penitential garb and go before the procession in her parish church on three Sundays and to go twice around the markets of Canterbury, Faversham, and Ashford with a half-pound candle in her right hand and the knife with which she killed him or a similar one in her left hand.²¹

In the literary plots of the English Middle Ages one particularly gruesome tale of Maria, the cannibal mother, is retold by several English writers, including John of Salisbury and John Lydgate. John of Salisbury retells the story in *Policraticus*, derived from Rufinus's Latin translation of Flavius Josephus's *The Jewish Wars* A.D. 77. With over a hundred manuscripts extant, John of Salisbury's text must have been popular and influential. In a twelfth-century Middle English translation, we read that

On Marie, a myld wyf, for mischef of foode
 Hir owen barn that go bar go brad on the gledis,
 Rostyth rigge & rib with rewful words
 Sayth: "Sone upon eache side our sorow is a-lofte.
 Batail a-boute the borwe, our bodies to quelle.
 Withyn hunger so hote that nez our herte brestyth;
 Therfor geld that I the gaf & agen tourne,
 & entr ther thou cam out! & etyth a schoulder."²²

¹⁸ Naomi D. Hurnard, *The King's Pardon for Homicide before 1307 A. D.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 169, cited in Kellum, "Infanticide," 374.

¹⁹ Kellum, "Infanticide," 386, note 51.

²⁰ Helmholz, "Infanticide," 383–84.

²¹ Cited in Kellum, "Infanticide," 376.

²² Salisbury, lines 1077–1084, cited in Merrall Llewelyn Price, "Imperial Violence and the Monstrous Mother: Cannibalism at the Siege of Jerusalem," *Domestic Violence in Medieval Texts*, 272–298; here

The original story had emphasized the extreme measures the people of Jerusalem were reduced to during the siege since Maria says she'll kill the baby boy at her breast to save it from famine or slavery. In later medieval works, however, the image of a Jewish woman killing and then eating her baby takes on anti-Semitic overtones. According to Merrall Llewelyn Price, Maria of Jerusalem (or Maria of Azov) stands at the "intersection of two linked discourses of medieval and voracious monstrosity—that of the Jew and that of the unnatural mother."²³ Shulamith Shahar says,

What seems to underlie this story is a fear of the "great mother," which is common to a large number of myths, of [the one] who bestows life but also devours and destroys in her rage. In the particular context of Christian culture, Maria of Azov represented the opposite pole to the Holy Mother. The cruelty of the former highlights the maternal compassion displayed by the latter.²⁴

While emphasizing religious and ethnic differences, the work uses infanticide to illustrate the most horrific sin possible. On the literal level, the female killer now openly slaughters her male child in order to survive physically; on the exegetical level, however, the Jewish mother killing her son evokes images of the crucifixion of Christ.

The later medieval plays called the "Slaughter of the Innocents" sharply contrast this view of Jewish mothers. These plays, in which male infants are slain, are found in all but one of the extant cycles of Corpus Christi plays from fourteenth- and fifteenth-century England.²⁵ In the York version of the play, an enraged Herod is counseled to order the death of all male infants under two years old to ensure that the Christ child dies. Although the audience knows from the preceding play, "The Flight into Egypt," that Joseph and Mary have already taken Jesus to Egypt to escape the massacre, this play shows the young infants still being slaughtered. The dramatic irony heightens the pathos as two mothers fight to protect their doomed sons and two soldiers express fear of these women. These Jewish mothers wail in agony for their dead infants, and an even angrier Herod callously speaks of wasted efforts.

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²³ Price, "Imperial Violence," 288.

²⁴ Cited in Price, "Imperial Violence," 288.

²⁵ The Corpus Christi Cycle Play "Slaughter of the Innocents" can be found in *The York Plays*, ed. R. Beadle (London: E. Arnold, 1982), 166–173; *The Chester Mystery Cycle*, eds. R[obert] M. Lumiansky and David Mills. EETS, ss 3 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974–1986); and *The Late Medieval Religious Plays of Bodleian MSS Digby and e Museo 160*, eds. Donald C. Baker, John L. Murphy, and Louis B. Hall. EETS, 283 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

Finally, if we look at three of Chaucer's tales, the first, the "Clerk's Tale," uses infanticide as a test, though, as it turns out, the murders never actually occur. In order to test Griselda's resolve never to say "no" to anything he asks, Walter first has her newborn daughter taken away and supposedly killed, and then six years later, her newly weaned son. Although the children are still alive, for eight years Griselda believes her husband has committed infanticide twice, and she never once complains. The act, then, depicts something a mother should in her basic nature find repulsive, but under Walter's control, Griselda does not react normally. Jean E. Jost's article "Medieval Children: Treatment in Middle English Literature," following in this volume, argues that "the children play a pivotal narrative role, being the most precious objects of which Walter could deprive Griselda, the most extreme form of testing her loyalty to him." Focusing on the father's motivations, Barrie Ruth Straus, on the other hand, argues that Walter's removing his first two children shows the father's right to commit infanticide, and she suggests that psychologically he may desire to be rid of the child whose birth makes his own death implicit.²⁶ Although the public dislikes his killing his children and mistreating his wife, he rules the land and is not, therefore, prosecuted or punished for the act. Since the children ultimately return, the tale denies or represses the father's violence in what is said to be a happy ending.²⁷

In "The Man of Law's Tale," Constance also believes her husband has attempted infanticide when she and her newborn son are sent out to sea alone in a boat. She asks her son, "Why wil thyn harde fader han thee spilt?"²⁸ Although it is actually her mother-in-law, the cruel Sultanness Donegild, who has ordered what looks like certain death for Constance and her son, we again see a woman tested by what she believes are the cruel actions of her husband. Chaucer inflates the pathos in both of these tales, showing the audience the mothers' tender care of the infants, gentle kisses, and fears about animals eating the body. In both tales, too, Chaucer links the women's suffering over their children's deaths to Mary's suffering for Christ. Graham N. Drake points out that the Marian laments of the time often link her suffering at the crucifixion to her memories of him as a baby, leading to the

²⁶ Barrie Ruth Straus, "Reframing the Violence of the Father: Reverse Oedipal Fantasies in Chaucer's Clerk's, Man of Law's and Prioress's Tales," in *Domestic Violence in Medieval Texts*, 122–138; here 130.

²⁷ Straus, "Reframing the Violence," 123.

²⁸ All Canterbury Tale quotations are taken from Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd ed., ed. John H. Fisher (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1989); here "Man of Law's Tale," line 857.

identification of Jesus with suffering children.²⁹ Both of these mothers equate themselves with Mary and the children with Jesus. Constance says to Mary,

Thow sawe thy child yslayn bifore thyne yen,/ and yet now lyveth my litel child,
parfay! / Now, lady bright, to whom all woful cryen, / . . . Rewe on my child, that of
thy gentillesse / Rewest on every reweful in distresse."³⁰

In her farewell speech to her daughter, Griselda says,

"But sith I thee have marked with the croys / Of thilke Fader —blessed moote he be! —
/ That for us deyde upon a croys of tree, / Thy soule, litel child, I hym bitake, / For this
nyght shaltow dyen for my sake."³¹

In the Christian exegeses of the tales, the women's obedience to the fathers mirrors the Christians' faith in God despite the many tragedies that might befall them. Both of these women's children, thought to have died through infanticide, actually survive and make dramatic reappearances. In these Chaucerian tales, therefore, feigned infanticides model the way Jesus is said to live, instead of dying, after the crucifixion. Their reappearances mirror his resurrection. Although many readers view these works as Christian or Boethian allegories, other critics, such as Hope Phyllis Weissman, see Chaucer ironically exaggerating the pathos and cruelty.³² If we allow for irony in these tales, the infanticides must highlight the ambivalence Christians feel towards a divine being who would callously take away their children. In either interpretation, however, the wife is subjected to the worst sorrow a husband can inflict on his wife, which is to kill their child.

In the last work to be discussed, "The Parson's Tale," the Parson lists among the types of homicide those that were considered infanticide at that time, ranging from overlaying a child while sleeping, to practicing contraception, to bringing about an abortion. The one form that he declares "certes, an horrible homicide," however, is that of a woman murdering her child for dread of worldly shame.³³ Essentially a sermon, this last tale of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* condemns the worldliness of the Pilgrims and their stories as it demands that they turn away

²⁹ Graham N. Drake, "Not Safe Even in Their Own Castles: Reading Domestic Violence Against Children in Four Middle English Romances," *Domestic Violence in Medieval Texts*, 139–163; here 142.

³⁰ Chaucer, "Man of Law's Tale," lines 848–54.

³¹ Chaucer, "The Clerk's Tale," lines 556–60.

³² Hope Phyllis Weissman, "Latin Gothic Pathos in the 'Man of Law's Tale,'" *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 9 (1979): 133–53. Those critics who see Constance as a Christian symbol include, for example, Eugene Clasby, "Chaucer's Constance: Womanly Virtue and the Heroic Life," *Chaucer Review*, 13 (1978–79): 221–39; and V[erdel] A. Kolve, *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative: The First Five Canterbury Tales* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1984), 297–358.

³³ Chaucer, "The Parson's Tale," lines 574–79.

from earthly sin. With great reprobation reserved for the woman who kills her child to avoid shame, "The Parson's Tale" looks back to the religious didacticism in the earliest works examined.

Despite the popularity of these stories in which infanticides occur, the number of infanticides recorded in legal or historical documents is small. Kellum notes that not one case of infanticide is listed in the coroners' rolls between 1265 and 1413 published by the Selden Society.³⁴ Barbara Hanawalt's study of crime between 1300 and 1348 finds only three instances of infanticide out of over 5000 homicide cases in gaol delivery rolls and in coroners' rolls.³⁵ Interestingly, two of those three cases were probably tried in the secular courts because the killers were clearly not the child's parents, and the third case, where two women named Alice are accused of drowning a three-day-old and proven innocent, it is not stated that either of them was the parent of the child. Hanawalt finds, then, no clear instance of a parent killing a young baby out of 5000 homicide cases.

In the church records as well, cases are very scarce. In R. H. Helmholz's study of the fifteenth-century Province of Canterbury, which includes the southern half of England and Wales, where the bulk of the English population lived at the time, the larger cities like London usually had only one case a year, and in many years, none.³⁶ Although several historians have suggested that some of the frequently cited infant deaths by drowning and fire could likely be unreported infanticides, the medieval communities did not choose to recognize them as such. As Hanawalt concludes, the evidence suggests either that infanticide was so widely spread that society accepted it with little legal attention given to it or that infanticide was not widely practiced in medieval England.³⁷ Although she does not explore these explanations in any detail, she does pose several possible reasons for the unexpectedly low number of infanticides at the time. The high infant mortality rates, which were approximately 12% to 20% according to E. A. Wrigley, might have played an important role.³⁸ With these death rates limiting the population growth, Hanawalt suggests there would have been a considerable need for field laborers, legitimate or illegitimate. Unmarried women, therefore, would not feel pressured to get rid of their newborns, resulting in very little stigma being placed

³⁴ Kellum, "Infanticide," 371.

³⁵ Hanawalt, *Crime and Conflict*, 154.

³⁶ Helmholz, "Infanticide," 384.

³⁷ Hanawalt, *Crime and Conflict*, 156.

³⁸ Figures from E[dward] A. Wrigley, *Daedalus* 97 (1968): 546–80, cited in Judith M. Bennett, *Women in the Medieval English Countryside: Gender and Household in Brigstock Before the Plague* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 68.

on illegitimacy at the time.³⁹ Another study, undertaken by Peter Hoffer and N. E. H. Hull, on the other hand, attributes the few cases to weaknesses in the legal system. They argue, more specifically, that the reluctance of neighbors to testify or the difficulty in obtaining proof would discourage the prosecution of suspected infanticides and reduce its official counts.⁴⁰

However, when we note how reprehensible the characters were considered who killed infants in the literature, it seems unlikely that these communities would allow the crime to go undetected. The figures on infanticide suggest instead that during the Middle Ages in England less stigma must have been attached to illegitimate births, which resulted in fewer cases of infanticide. Perhaps the changing legal status of those born in servitude in England from 1326 on is one possible cause for the tolerance of illegitimate births. Earlier, illegitimate children born on English estates generally took their mothers' status; thus, children born to unfree women would themselves be born to servitude. From the beginning of the English common law period of 1326, however, all illegitimate children were considered free, regardless of their mothers' status,⁴¹ and women remained in legal bondage into the fifteenth century in England.⁴² This freedom from villein status could have helped to offset the shame attached to illegitimate births and, thus, have decreased the likelihood of infanticide during the later Middle Ages.

These very infrequent medieval cases of infanticide stand out in contrast to the larger number of cases reported and the heightened public attention the crime received during the early modern period in England.⁴³ Laura Gowing records seventy cases of newborn infanticides tried at the Northern Circuit Assizes from Yorkshire, Northumberland, Cumberland and Westmoreland between 1642 and 1680, and indictments show 25% more possible cases, most involving servant women.⁴⁴ Hoffer and Hull cite children as victims (80% of whom were newborns) in 30% of all murder indictments in Essex, 34% in Middlesex, and 28% in Sussex between 1559 and 1600.⁴⁵ Both studies attribute the increased numbers of cases reported to changes in social beliefs. With increased attention given to concealed

³⁹ Hanawalt, *Crime and Conflict*, 156.

⁴⁰ Hoffer and Hull, *Murdering Mothers*, 6.

⁴¹ Paul R. Hyams, "The Proof of Villein Status in the Common Law," *The English Historical Review* 89, 353 (Oct. 1974): 721-749; here 746.

⁴² Susan Mosher Stuard, "Ancillary Evidence for the Decline of Medieval Slavery," *Past and Present* 149 (Nov. 1995): 3-28; here 16, note 46.

⁴³ Hoffer and Hull, *Murdering Mothers*, 123.

⁴⁴ Laura Gowing, "Secret Births and Infanticide in Seventeenth-Century England," *Past and Present* 156 (Aug. 1997): 87-115; here 89.

⁴⁵ Hoffer and Hull, *Murdering Mothers*, 15.

sin and sexual excess by Reformation preachers as well as the government's fear of the landless, wandering groups of poor displaced by enclosure laws, attitudes toward illegitimate children apparently changed. Called "naked Bathshebas," poor serving women especially were singled out at the opening of the semiannual assize court sessions for their concealment of sexual transgressions.⁴⁶

In 1576, the Elizabethan Poor Law (18 Eliz. I, c.3, 1576) required justices to question women accused of having illegitimate children in order to identify fathers so that money could be obtained to relieve parish charity funds. These unmarried mothers were treated as shameful harlots who could be corporally punished or sent to the house of correction.⁴⁷ Furthermore, in a 1624 statute (the Stuart Bastard Neonaticide Act, 21 James I, c. 27, 1624), the crime moved to the royal courts for the first time; murdering an illegitimate child was finally listed as a specific crime.⁴⁸ Alluding to lewd mothers who drowned their babies, this law also outlawed concealing the death of a newborn even if the baby was stillborn. A 1650 act made conviction of fornication a second or subsequent time punishable by death.⁴⁹

These laws suggest that once society's views on illegitimacy changed, infanticide by unmarried women became more common. Although the exact numbers are impossible to retrieve for the Middle Ages, Hanawalt cites an illegitimacy rate between 8% and 11% and no infanticides in the early fourteenth century on East Anglian Estates.⁵⁰ For the early modern period, in contrast, the illegitimacy rate is halved: Orme gives a 4.5% illegitimacy rate and Wrightson gives a 4% illegitimate birthrate in Terling, Essex, between 1601–1665, or 49 children out of 1367 births.⁵¹ Although the records suggest fewer children were born out of wedlock in the early modern period (4% or 4.5% compared to 8%–11%), the laws, the legal records, and the sermons preached by protestant ministers suggest that perhaps the reality was not that fewer children were born out of wedlock, but that fewer survived very long after birth.

⁴⁶ Hoffer and Hull, "Infanticide," 11.

⁴⁷ Kellum, "Infanticide," 371.

⁴⁸ Keith Wrightson, "Infanticide in Earlier Seventeenth-Century England." *Local Population Studies* 15 (1975): 10–22; here 11.

⁴⁹ Wrightson, "Infanticide," 21, note 22.

⁵⁰ Barbara A. Hanawalt, "The Female Felon in Fourteenth-Century England," *Women in Medieval Society*, ed. Susan Mosher Stuard (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976), 125–140; here 139, note 25.

⁵¹ Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 57; Wrightson, "Infanticide," 19.

Both the medieval historical records and the literature portray women committing infanticide much more frequently than men. In the literary works examined, only Athelstan actually kills his own unborn child. Walter says he has killed his children, but has not, and the male soldiers do slaughter innocent male infants in the cycle plays. Women are responsible for all the other deaths. The victims' gender in the historical records, however, is less clear. Skewed sex ratios point to an interesting difference between what the literature shows and what some medieval inheritance and tax records say about unexpectedly small number of females in the population. Of the victims in the eleven literary works discussed, only one victim, Griselda's first child, is a girl. While the gender of six of the infants is unknown, four of the victims are clearly boys and an unknown number of males are represented as killed in the Corpus Christi play "The Slaughter of the Innocents." With the importance given male heirs in the medieval world, the deaths of the boys in the literature highlight the loss of legitimate family heirs. The six deaths of unknown gender, however, suggest that losing an infant of either gender was quite painful. There is simply no evidence in the literature that deaths of newborn females are considered convenient.

An influential study by Josiah C. Russell of inheritance and tax records, however, reports high sex ratios, meaning considerably more males than females in the population. Russell says that normal sex ratios for landholding families in medieval England give way to higher sex ratios in the mid-thirteenth century and rise in the fourteenth century to 133:100 before the plague normalizes them. The ratio again rises in the fifteenth century. One striking sample of figures for serfs on an estate in Hastings in 1391–92 shows a ratio of 170:100.⁵² Yet, as in the literature, the few infanticides recorded in legal records show no evidence that females were killed more frequently than boys. In most cases no sex is given for the child, but those that do list gender are fairly equally split between male and female deaths

In her study of the high sex ratio in St. Germain-des-Pres, France, Emily Coleman suggests other explanations than female infanticide for the larger number of males recorded there. Coleman makes a good case for the undercounting of females by clerics, for women dying frequently in childbirth, for women being married off or taken in elsewhere as servants, and for immigration of male workers into the area as plausible explanations for the skewed sexual ratios, and the same explanations may account for Russell's figures in England.⁵³ It is, of

⁵² Josiah C. Russell, *British Medieval Population* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1948), 167–68.

⁵³ In population studies of the early modern period, some researchers have suggested infanticide might

course, also possible that differences in feeding or care practices for male and female infants and young children might have led to higher death rates for young females. Although it is possible that secret female infanticide was being practiced in England, neither the court records nor the literature recognizes this as happening.⁵⁴ If people were selectively killing female infants, no one was even hinting at it in writing.

To conclude, in many ways the literature and the historical records parallel or complement each other. Early in the medieval period, ecclesiastical sources assume that only illegitimate infants born to unmarried poor women are victims of infanticide, and the literature of the time uses infanticide in this context to represent a reprehensible sin that can be forgiven if the killer repents. Although the relatively light punishment of penance raises questions for some scholars about how seriously the crime was taken by legal authorities at that time, the literature's depiction of sincere repentance leading to divine forgiveness shows us that in the context of the culture's religious beliefs, they took it quite seriously.

The later legal documents define infanticide in a wider set of circumstances, and the literary works portray the act in more complex situations. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the popular imagination represented by the writers of the time envisions an array of new contexts—politics, ethnicity, religious differences, spiritual despair, social roles, family dynamics, inheritance laws, and unbridled emotion—in which to explore a culture's killing of infants. While the Reformation that follows in sixteenth-century England leads to higher numbers of infanticides, mostly of illegitimate infants, the historical records in the Middle Ages show little concern over births to unwed mothers. What these historical records do show is that infants were valued in this society. The literature, moreover, shows that these infants were loved. Whereas the legal and historical documents record that an infant has been killed, the literature fleshes out the culture's attitude toward this act. Within this literature, the strong emotional bonds between parents and their young children are strikingly clear. At the same time that they illustrate the sinful or inhumane nature of the killers, these deaths also highlight the grief and despair of parents whose children have died. In fact, the success of these works depends on the audiences' ability to empathize with the grieving parents. Even the most allegorical of the works rely on the audience's emotional attachments to their own

have been used to limit population growth. See E[dward] A. Wrigley, "Family Limitation in Pre-Industrial England," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 19 (1966): 82–109; and J[onathan] D. Chambers, *Population, Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 78.

⁵⁴ Emily Coleman, "Infanticide in the Early Middle Ages," *Women in Medieval Society*, 47–70; here 56.

children to heighten their understanding of the ways of God or the resurrection of Christ.

Despite Philippe Ariès's belief that in medieval Europe a dead child "which had disappeared so soon in life was not worthy of remembrance," the dead child is never forgotten in infanticide literature.⁵⁵ Each child's life matters, even that of an illegitimate newborn, and each child's death resonates with sadness as well as significance in the literature of medieval England.

⁵⁵ Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* 38.

Jean E. Jost

(Bradley University)

Loving Parents in Middle English Literature¹

"I could never have thought that God having divided me from my son, [and having him] pass from this life to another could have been for me and is such a grievous knife."²

With this pitiful lamentation, Giovanni Morelli bemoans the loss of his ten-year-old son in 1406. Another grieving parent decries "It pleased God to call to himself the said Lucha on the eleventh day of August 1390; let us hope he has received him with his blessing and with my own."³ Similarly, the expression of anguish by the grieving father of three-year-old Falchetta Rinucci in 1509 suggests his sincere sorrow at the great loss of his daughter as he laments "I am certain that she has flown to heaven . . . [and pray that] this saintly little dove will pray Divine goodness and his sweet Mother for us."⁴ Such examples of parental devotion confirm one side of the controversy over the actual role of children in medieval society. The long-standing view, originally developed by Philippe Aries,⁵ that children were undervalued, unappreciated, and untended has recently been challenged by the discovery of contradictory documents such as these testimonials, heartfelt tombstone engravings, and letters.

Recent historical and literary critics have thus questioned the presumption that children have been ignored or downplayed in life as well as in literature of the Middle Ages. They contend that, contrary to popular belief, children have in fact

¹ Earlier versions of this paper were delivered at the Southeastern Medieval Association in Asheville, North Carolina, September 2000 and at the Conference on Childhood in Tucson, April, 2004.

² Quoted by Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "Women and the Family," *The Medieval World*, ed. Jacques LeGoff, (1990; London: Collins and Brown, 1997), 303.

³ Klapisch-Zuber, "Women and the Family," 303.

⁴ Klapisch-Zuber, "Women and the Family," 302-03.

⁵ Philippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Knopf, 1962).

played a rather significant role in their parents' lives, and in the plots of English literature. While it is true that abandonment, suspicious crib-death, and at least some infanticide indicate conflicting attitudes, especially in the more poverty-stricken areas of society, Hans-Werner Goetz believes the notion that children were regularly ignored or neglected is unfounded. He maintains that

the previously held view that children were generally perceived to be a burden and little loved has been refuted. Burial with tombstones and the preserved letters of consolation written to parents whose children had died contradict such a theory. . . . On the whole, there can be little doubt that children were treated lovingly . . .⁶

Barbara Hanawalt concurs, remarking

We who study medieval society . . . have neglected the two-way relationship between parents and children, and we have overlooked entirely the importance of community in raising and protecting children . . . [our studies have been] limited to cultural expressions of love of children rather than to the discipline, training, and oversight [of] the community. The culture of nurturing was continually articulated in medieval sources ranging from coroners' inquests to the Prioress's Tale.⁷

Hanawalt's comments alert us to the need to examine more fully those familial assumptions of the last century. John Boswell furthers Hanawalt's view, noting that

It has been argued in the past few decades that there was no concept of "childhood in premodern Europe, and that parent-child relations in previous ages were for this and other reasons (such as the high mortality rate) inherently and categorically different from those in the modern West. . . . But such theories do not account well for the available evidence There was no *general* absence of tender feelings for children as special beings among any premodern European peoples.⁸

Allison P. Coudert's article "Educating Girls in Early Modern Europe and America" in this volume posits the same of the Early Modern period, noting, "In these early modern works [such as Rousseau's *Emile*, Coler's *Haussbuch*, and Montaigne's "On the Education of Children"] one finds the same concern for the health and well-being of children . . . the very real affection and concern the majority of parents had for their children"—and this despite a rather harsh form

⁶ Hans-Werner Goetz, *Life in the Middle Ages from the Seventh to the Thirteenth Century*, tr. Albert Wimmer (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 54.

⁷ Barbara Hanawalt, "Narrative of a Nurturing Culture: Parents and Neighbors in Medieval England," *Essays in Medieval Studies* 12 (1995), <http://www.luc.edu/publications/medieval/vol12/hanawalt.html> (last accessed on March 14, 2005).

⁸ John Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (New York: Pantheon, 1988,) 36, 37.

of education of children, especially of girls, in the wake of the revised family ideology triggered by the Protestant Reformation.

But one can understand why Ariès suspected a certain distancing between parents and children, given the harsh economic conditions, the exorbitant mortality rate, and the lack of available social history or other concrete written evidence. And no doubt both situations attained: children were both loved and prized and also distanced and abused. David Graizbord's article "Converso Children Under the Inquisitorial Microscope in the Seventeenth Century: What May the Sources Tell us about Their Lives?" in this volume points to the ambiguous situation in seventeenth-century Spain where children were manipulated by the Inquisition into implicating their parents: "By alleging that their parents and relatives had tried to incorporate them in a life of Judaizing, the youths sought to settle scores and claim a measure of personal independence."⁹ At least some measure of distance or disaffection must be assumed from such a statement, even if it is the normal phenomenon of children growing into maturity. Nor did the Holy Office respect the status of child, using "a form of inquisitorial manipulation so extreme that it resulted in the radical alteration of his legal, religious and hence social status. Such were the perils of being considered a 'child' by the Holy Office." Furthermore, Klapisch-Zuber concludes that "Outside these favored milieus in which parents knew how to express their hopes and their suffering, direct testimony on the relations between parents and children is rare."¹⁰ In 1990, Jacques Le Goff objected to Ariès view, wisely moderating his previous position "that Philippe Ariès was correct in affirming that in medieval Europe the child was not a highly valued object—which did not prevent parents from loving their children, but loving them particularly in view of the adults that they would become and that it was desirable that they become in the last possible time."¹¹ Confirming this final premise, Goetz claims, "By the tenth century at the latest, small children were considered full-fledged members of society,"¹² thus shortening the period of complete nurture and protection, and perhaps thereby diminishing significance of the concept of childhood. In considering the importance of this time in life, what, then, constitutes "childhood"? As Boswell notes,

"Child" is in itself not an uncomplicated term. Among ancient and modern writers, conceptions of "childhood" have varied widely, posing considerable lexical problems for investigators. Even the bases of distinction change: sometimes the root concept arises from chronological boundaries (to age twenty-one, to age

⁹ Graizbord, "Converso Children," 381.

¹⁰ Klapisch-Zuber, "Women and the Family," 303.

¹¹ Jacques Le Goff, "Introduction," *The Medieval World*, ed. Jacques Le Goff (1990; London: Collins and Brown, Ltd., 1997), 16–17.

¹² Goetz, *Life in the Middle Ages*, 54.

seven, etc.), sometimes from associated aspects such as innocence, dependency, mental incapacity, or youthful appearance. . . . According to [Isidore of Seville] up to 6 years constituted infancy; 7 to 13, childhood; 14 to 27, adolescence; 28 to 48, youth; 49 to 76 maturity (*senectus*); and 77 to death, old age.¹³

More recently, MacEdward Leach¹⁴ has considered the period of minority to extend to age twenty, or to an unspecified age of physical or mental competence. Peter Fleming's 2001 *Family and Household in Medieval England* concurs with Boswell, as well as the eighth-century Isidore,

Medieval theorists divided childhood into three parts: infantia, from birth to the age of seven; pueritia, between the ages of seven and 14, and adolescentia, from 14 to the age of majority, which was increasingly regarded as 21. The common law recognized 21 as the age at which males holding by military tenures could enter their estates and administer them independent of parents or guardians. . . for society in general the defining point came when the young person was married and began to live with his or her spouse as husband and wife.¹⁵

Therefore, within the context of this discussion, any person who has not reached full adulthood or taken a spouse may be called a "child"—one still maturing physically, mentally, or emotionally. The span of childhood thus encompasses a flexible time period, and within this time, the child is slowly progressing from stage to stage as he or she moves into maturity.

Hence, within any given literary context—short tale, narrative poem, or long narrative—the maturation of a hero through social acculturation within family is best done within a protracted, episodic narrative, thus allowing sufficient germinating time for both the child's and the story's development, simultaneously confirming the medieval audience in its society. According to E. J. Graff, the three developments, of child, story, and audience, are coextensive throughout most literature. The family, furthermore, is the means of nurturing and bringing to fulfillment the human offspring, the author's literary one, and the audience's cognitive one. And while the traditional European family may not have always maintained close family ties,¹⁶ Middle English tales regularly depict emotional family bonds and touching moments at the heart of the plot. Inevitably, a child is at the core. While certain children, such as the little girl in Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale* may seem to function minimally, or stand as representatives of "the child," others are crucial for the development of plot and theme. In fact, children in Middle English literature—fiction, drama, and poetry—often play a particularly

¹³ Boswell, *Kindness of Strangers*, 26, 30.

¹⁴ MacEdward Leach, *Amis and Amiloun*. EETS, o.s. 203 (1937; London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1960), 128, note to l. 1828.

¹⁵ Peter Fleming, *Family and Household in Medieval England* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 59.

¹⁶ E. J. Graff, "What Makes a Family," *What Is Marriage For?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 95–97.

significant role in the episodic, action-oriented events of extensive tales: they effect the story's narrative turns or outcome, sometimes evolving into its heroes, either as children or budding adults. This study seeks to dispel the notion that children hold a minimal literary role within Middle English literature by examining their effect, specifically within the family situation, on the outcomes of several Middle English narratives. They may be aligned with or at odds with their family members, but in any event, they are not insignificant. Within these Middle English narratives, the growth and blossoming of child, story, and audience awareness are effected through the agency of family, and by means of the narrative.

Perhaps medieval authors include children in their literary works to evoke emotion, most often using them as actual or potential victims as well as to further narrative action. Two primary emotional paradigms overshadow the others, that of the innocent victim, seriously hurt or killed in tragic circumstances, and that of reclaimed victim, saved from destruction at the eleventh hour in a comic redemption. In both cases, of tragedy and its redemption, the pity and fear of the Greek drama, are the cathartic means of audience release.

Representing these binary oppositions are the Cycle Plays' depiction of the "Slaughter of the Innocents" falling into tragic demise, physical if not spiritual death on the one hand, and the near tragic "Abraham and Isaac" salvation story heralding victory on the other; both elicit pathos through the children's innocence and the gruesome circumstances. Appropriately, drama embodies both paradigms as a medium conducive to, and traditionally conveying emotion. Since the medieval treatment of children is overwhelmingly emotional, even pathetic—seeming to evoke pathos by their very presence—drama is a likely home for these emblems of doomed and redeemed victims. Other genres such as certain Chaucerian tales and the alliterative *Morte Arthure* poem, however, reinforce the themes of actual or near tragedy, with or without redemption. This discussion focuses on dramatic paradigms representing children in the Slaughter of the Innocents and Abraham and Isaac plays, and representation of other doomed or redeemed children in non-dramatic literature who exemplify these dramatic models.

Slaughter of the Innocents

"The Slaughter of the Innocents" iconically represents those lost children unredeemed from their fate, made to suffer needlessly, or mercilessly dispensed with. Unlike children in the Abraham-Isaac model who are at risk, threatened, and nearly sacrificed, these unfortunates are in fact slain. Their martyrdom, or their redemption in the next world, does not modify the victim paradigm. Sometimes

their parents are the misguided perpetrators, or figure in the play as sorrowful victims of their children's deaths.

Stage/costume directions for the eleventh- or twelfth-century Fleury Playbook containing the "Service for Representing the Slaughter of the Innocents" begins the play with "For the Slaughter of the Children let the Innocents be dressed in white stoles."¹⁷ This symbol of their spotless nature free from sin makes their demise all the more devastating. The play's crisis occurs when the man-at-arms advises Herod:

Determine, my lord, to vindicate your wrath, and, with sword's point unsheathed,
order that the boys be slain; and perchance among the slain will Christ be killed.

Herod delivering the sword to him saying:

My excellent man-at-arms, cause the boys to perish by the sword. (14–15)

While treatment of the actual murders are left to the individual producer, stage directions instruct: "Let the mothers, falling down, pray for the victims." When Rachel enters, the directions indicate "standing over the boys let her mourn, falling at times to earth, saying:

Alas, tender babes, we see how your limbs have been mangled!
Alas, sweet children, murdered in a single frenzied attack!
Alas, one whom neither piety nor your tender age restrained!
Alas, wretched mothers, we who are compelled to see this!
Alas, we do we do now, why do we not submit to these things?
Alas, because no joys can erase our memories and sorrow,
For the sweet children are gone! (21–27)

This parent suffers from the evil perpetrated on her sons, like Abraham in the second paradigm who anguishes from the demand to slay his son; but in this play, Rachel's pain satisfies no divine injunction. When the two comforters admonish her "Although you grieve, rejoice that you weep, / For, truly, your sons live blessed above the stars" (30–31), she rejects both their otherworldly perspective and their appeal to her vanity, that tears spoil her beauty. She retorts:

How shall I rejoice, while I see the lifeless limbs,
While thus I shall have been distressed to the depths of my heart?
Truly these boys will cause me to mourn endlessly.
O sadness! O the rejoicings of fathers and mothers changed
To mournful grief; pour forth weeping of tears. (32–36)

Furthermore, she is angry at their accusations, and their presumption:

¹⁷ *Medieval Drama*, ed. David Bevington. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), 67. Subsequent quotations will be from this text unless otherwise noted.

¹⁹ Ingham, "From Kinship to Kingship," 19.

Other Doomed Children: The Prioress's Tale

Examples of the "Slaughter of the Innocents" model, in which children are often murdered by misguided or confused parents, include the Chaucerian Prioress's Clergeon, the Physician's Virginia, children of the Monk's Hugelyn, and Mordred's and Guinevere's children ordered slain by Arthur. The fate of these doomed children casts a black cloud over literary medieval childhood.

However one feels about the Prioress, or even the innocence of her seven-year-old clergeon traipsing through the ghetto, insensitively intoning his hymns to taunt the Jews, no one wants him dead. Calculated audience empathy is the Prioress's goal. The vulnerability of this fatherless lad devoted to the Virgin, his sincerity and youth, "For he so tendre was of age" (VII.524) are emotionally evocative. In "Victims or Martyrs: Children, Anti-Judaism, and the Stress of Change in Medieval England," here in this volume, Diane Peters Auslander likewise notes the emotional value and appeal of children who "adorned with the aura of Christian sanctity and martyrdom, had the power to move whole communities of people . . . [generating] a powerful effect on people's behavior" (#). His opposition, the evil-hearted Satanic Jews, are every bit as vile and violent as Herod's messengers slaying the babes. Further, the Prioress claims a Jewish conspiracy, a plan not unlike Herod's, to destroy that which threatens them, even if it be innocent little boys. She states, "Fro thennes forth the Jues han conspired/ This innocent out of this world to chace."²⁰ The gruesome details of the murderer who "kitte his throte, and in a pit hym caste. . . . Where as thise Jewes purgen hire entraille" (VII.571, 573) is reminiscent of the stark stage directions in the "Innocents" play. There "the children lie thrown on their backs" (after line 49), similarly degraded. The boy's anxious mother, "with face pale of drede and bisy thought . . . With moodres pitee in hir brest enclosed, / She gooth, as she were half out of hir mynde" (VII.589, 593-94) searching for her missing son. She "preyth pitously" with maternal agony, frustration, and the pain of loss similarly expressed by Rachel. The Prioress even explicitly associates the two, lamenting:

His mooder swownynge by his beere lay;
Unnethe myghte the peple that was theree
This newe Rachel brynge fro his beere. (VII.625-27)

The "pitous lamentacioun" (621) of the crowd echoes the sentiment of the narrator, and the expected audience response. Although the Prioress's child is granted a brief and miraculous reprieve to sing with a cut throat until the Virgin's grain is removed from his mouth, his demise is immanent. He is finally a lost victim,

²⁰ *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), VII.565-66. Subsequent quotations of Chaucerian texts will be taken from this volume.

martyred for his song, unredeemed for his offense. Some might claim a greater supernatural victory for the lad, but on a natural, human level, his is a tragedy. Thus, a pattern amazingly similar to that of the holy innocents is discernable: dangerous circumstances, anguished mothers, pitying narrator, no remedy, vicious murder. The wailing and noisome crying of the mothers in "The Slaughter of the Innocents," dramatically reinforced by their gestures, indicates their emotional involvement with their sons. In both cases, bereaved mothers' sorrow reveal great bonding, and their children's importance in their lives.

The Physician's Tale

In Virginia's situation, her anguished parent is the cause of her demise—through misguided or immoral perception. Anne Lancashire, in examining the "Physician's Tale's" sacrificial elements, points to Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac rehearsed throughout contemporaneous drama, lying behind the Chaucerian sacrifice.²¹ Her point is well taken, and her schema enlightening; my thesis, however, distinguishes between attempted and actual sacrifice, thus placing Virginia in the Innocents category of physically unredeemed victims. Whereas the Prioress elicited sympathy for her clergeon by his tender age, the Physician does so by recounting Virginia's beauty and goodness in more than seventy lines: "And if that excellent was hire beautee, / A thousand foold moore vertuous was she . . . As wel in goost as body chast was she" (VI.39–40, 43). Just as the Prioress claimed the fiend made his nest in the Jews' hearts, so here that same "feend into [Apus'] herte ran" (VI.130), inspiring him to violate the young maid. He does so by secretly colluding with the churl Claudius whom he bribes into "hire conspiracie" (VI.149); as the Jews conspired to slay the boy, so the judge conspires to deceive and defile the maid. Virginius' anguished decision is in fact reminiscent of Abraham's, but with one primary difference—the maid perishes. Her father's pity for her, despite his resignation, is evocative:

And with a face deed as asshen colde
Upon hir humble face he gan biholde,
With fadres pitee stikyng thurgh his herte,
Al wolde he from his purpos nat converte. (VI.209–12)

One may question his judgment, priorities, steadfast determination, or his failure to find alternatives to killing her, but not his sorrow for having to do so. His lament to her is emotional and pained:

²¹ Anne Lancashire, "Chaucer and the Sacrifice of Isaac," *Chaucer Review* 9 (1975): 320–26.

Ther been two weyes, outhere deeth or shame,
 That thou most suffre; alas, that I was bore!
 For nevere thou deservedest wherfore
 To dyen with a swerd or with a knyf.
 O deere doghter, endere of my lyf,
 Which I have fostred up with swich plesaunce
 That thou were nevere out of my remembraunce!
 O doghter, which that art my laste wo,
 And in my lyf my laste joye also. (VI.214–22)

His announcement to her of impending death, her incredulity, her begging for mercy, her tears as she hangs on his neck, her final resignation in God's name reiterate Isaac's lament:

"O mercy, deere fader!" quod this mayde . . .
 The teeris bruste out of hir eyen two,
 And seyde, "Goode fader, shal I dye?
 Is ther no grace, is there no remedye?" . . .
 And after, whan hir swownyng is agon,
 She riseth up, and to hir fader sayde,
 "Blissed be God that I shal dye a mayde!
 Yif me my deeth, er that I have a shame;
 Dooth with youre child youre wyl, a Goddes name!"
 (VI.231, 234–36; 246–50)

Albrecht Classen's fine introduction to this volume points to similar grief when Engelhard also laments his own killing of his children. Had a *deus ex machina* or other divine interposition appeared from the sky to spirit her to safety, this tale would more precisely recreate the Abraham and Isaac play; but, unfortunately for Virginia, no saving redemption is at hand. Death by the sword, despite her heavenly victory, places her within the "Slaughter of the Innocents" paradigm. The entire narrative centers around the child Virginia, and without her, and her pathetic situation, the story and tale could not exist. Whether his action of killing the maid is legitimate or not, Virginius' pain in doing so is undeniable, as it heightens the pathos and confirms his emotional involvement with his daughter.

The Monk's Tale

Likewise, in Chaucer's *Monk's Tale*, Hugelyn is yet another anguished father unable to prevent his sons' death. Although his cannibalism is found in the tradition, this facet of the lore is omitted in Chaucer's version. The Monk begins his story with

Off the Erl Hugelyn of Pyze the langour
 Ther may no tonge telle for pitee. (VII.2407–08)

Like the Prioress, the Monk elicits sympathy for the sons based on their youthful innocence, for “The eldest scarsly fyf yeer was of age” (VII.2412). Imprisoned in a tower with their father without adequate food, their plight elicits his heartfelt compassion. Realizing that they will die soon, “Allas!” quod he, “Allas that I was wroght!” / Therwith the teeris fillen from his yen” (VII.2429–30). Even more pathetic and emotionally stirring are the queries of the youngest:

His yonge sone, that thre yeer was of age,
 Unto hym seyde, “Fader, why do ye wepe?
 Whanne wol the gayler bryngen oure potage?
 Is ther no morsel breed that ye do kepe?
 I am so hungry that I may nat slepe.
 Now wolde God that I myghte slepen evere! (VII.2431–36)

Realizing his end is near, with no rescue possible, the babe cries “Farewel, fader, I moot dye!” / And kist his fader, and dyde the same day” (VII.2441–42). Biting his arms for grief, Hugelyn agonizes over the baby’s death until his sons, thinking him hungry, offer him their flesh saying:

. . . Fader, do nat so, allas!
 But rather ete the flessh upon us two.
 Oure flessh thou yaf us, take oure flessh us fro,
 And ete ynogh” . . .
 They leyde hem in his lappe adoun and deyde.
 (VII.2449–52, 2454)

Interestingly this time the focus of pity is split between Hugelyn and his sons, all victims of starvation and he being a victim of cognition. No sense of redemptive grace lightens this tragic, and even sensational scene. It is a tale of child-parent interaction, desperation and horror.

The Alliterative Morte Arthure

Few children people the Arthurian Courts, but Guinevere’s and Mordred’s children in the Alliterative *Morte Arthure*²² stand out as the exception. The only crime of these doomed children is that of their birth, their heritage: they are as illegitimate as their notorious father Mordred, and as cursed. These semi-

²² *King Arthur’s Death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthur and Alliterative Morte Arthure*, ed. Larry D. Benson. The Library of Literature, 29 (Indianapolis and New York: Bobs Merrill Co., 1974).

incestuous offspring of Queen Guinevere and her husband King Arthur's son/nephew Mordred by Arthur's sister Morgan la Fay are succinctly, but definitively laid to rest. Mordred, realizing their danger, sends word to Guinevere to "fly far off and flee with her children, / Till he could steal off and speak to her safely" (3907–08). But Arthur's vengeful retaliation will no doubt reach them. In the final throes of battle, having been butchered by his illegitimate son, the King demands the death of his grandsons: on his deathbed, Arthur will prevent these children from running, and perhaps ruining the realm, by ordering their slaughter:

Sithen merk manly to Mordred children,
That they be slely slain and slongen in waters;
Let no wicked weed wax ne writhe on this erthe (4320–22)

[... sternly mark that Mordred's children
Be secretly slain and slung into the seas:
Let no wicked weed in this world take root and thrive.]

These innocent sons of a traitorous father and vengeful grandfather are considered dangerous because of their heritage—for there is precedent: Mordred himself is thought evil because of his unnatural birth, son of a brother and sister. For his young sons, there is no redemption. They too are slaughtered innocents, dead at the hands of their vengeful surrogate-father, their mother's husband. Although the children are not the subject of this story of an empire's self-destruction, their slaughter is the culmination of all that is unjust within it—that injustice perhaps being one reason for its ultimate demise.

Thus, no saving grace reclaims these poor unfortunates—Virginia, the Prioress's little clergeon, Hugolino's sons, Guinevere and Mordred's children—from the ravishes of this world—often implemented by their parents. However spiritually saved, they are doomed to the world. As metaphorical siblings of the innocents slaughtered by Herod, they share in the characteristics of that paradigm: empathetic treatment, some complicity by parents, but final demise.

Redemption of Isaac

The "Abraham and Isaac" model offers a more fortuitous fate, for although these children undergo hardship, they yet find relief in rescue, ultimately becoming relatively happy. Interestingly, a parent, albeit an unwilling one, is still often the source of danger to, as well as pity for these innocents. Anne Lancashire precisely summarizes the Isaac story as interpreted by medieval dramatists, noting:

In the seven British Abraham and Isaac plays still extant today—four from the English cycles, one from the Cornish cycle, and the Brome and Northampton Abraham and Isaac dramas—details of the story vary, but within an outline common to all: God's

ordering of the sacrifice, Abraham's acceptance of God's will, Abraham's sorrow at what he must do, a lengthy dialogue between Abraham and Isaac, which includes Abraham's announcement to Isaac that Isaac must be killed by his father, Isaac's (ultimate) acceptance of God's will (except in the Towneley play), and God's intervention at the moment of sacrifice, to save Isaac. And some details, though not found in all seven, are in a majority of the plays: for example, Isaac's extreme youth and innocence, Isaac's initial terror when told by Abraham of the necessary sacrifice, Isaac's request for a quick or easy death, and reference to a sword as the instrument of sacrifice. In every play, at the heart of the drama is the dialogue between Isaac and his father: a dialogue highly emotional, and emphasizing the mutual love of father and child.²³

This Biblical trope of a father instructed to slay his only son whom he loves and prizes as a test of loyalty to God, cruel as it might be, finally proves joyous at the end. The entire focus of these plays is on the subject, the idealized boy Isaac; God's harsh injunction and Abraham's obedient response both center on the child, even though the message of the tale is that one owes God whatever he demands, morally justified or not.

The Brome Old Testament "Sacrifice of Isaac," a figural anti-Crucifixion play prefiguring the sacrifice of Christ, differs from its New Testament fulfillment in that the sacrifice of Isaac is never in fact enacted. Nevertheless, the pathos from the danger to young Isaac, and Abraham's passion for and fear of his loss is evocative. As David Bevington says of the play, "The account is remarkable for its ballad-like simplicity, its intense portrayal of filial and parental tenderness, and its sustaining of dramatic tension."²⁴ The diction is appropriately child-like, even when Abraham speaks. His prayer to God aptly sets the stage for the conflict:

In my age thou hast grantyd me this,
That this yowng child with me shall won.
I love nothing so myche, iwise,
Excep[t]e thin[e] owyn selffe, dere Fader of blisse,
As Isaac her[e], my owyn swete son.
I have diverse childryn moo,
The w[h]ich I love not halffe so well.
This fayer swet child, he schereys me soo
In every place w[h]er that I goo,
That noo dessece her[e] may I fell. (11–20)

Ironically, like Joseph the favorite son, Isaac will be endangered precisely because of his father's preference. His value in himself, as a "swet child" and to his father whom he attempts to cheer up in his time of anguish, establishes the expectation

²³ Lancashire, "Chaucer and the Sacrifice of Abraham," 321.

²⁴ Bevington, *Medieval Drama*, 308.

of disaster. Both touching, and anticipatory, Abraham prays for Isaac's health, grace, and safety. Isaac's ready obedience to follow Abraham without question when "Goo we hom and take owre rest" anticipates his ready obedience in a more perilous adventure. The play offers the dubiously legitimate motive for God's testing of Abraham: a father's express devotion to his son by an Old Testament God jealously testing "Whether he lovith better his child or me" (44). Compliance wins him God's friendship. Abraham's crisis of conscience is wrenching, evoking pity for the struggling old man who utters:

I lovyd never thing soo mych in erde,
 And now I must the child goo kill.
 A, Lord God, my conseons is stron[g]ly steryd! . . .
 I love my child as my liffe,
 But yit I love my God myche more. (76–78; 81–82)

But the resolution is one thing; the execution is another. The agonized father repeatedly expresses his anguish, exclaiming:

A, Lord of hevyn, my handys I wring!
 This childys words all to-wo[u]nd my harte
 . . . my hart brekith on twain,
 This childys wordys they be so tender! (120–21; 127–28)

Isaac's slow realization that, lacking a live beast to sacrifice, he is to die in its stead, is skillfully depicted. The boy cries out,

Ya, fader, but my hart beginnith to quake,
 To se that scharpe sword in yowre hond . . .
 Tell me, my dere fader, or that ye ses,
 Bere ye yowre sword draw[n] for me? . . .
 I preye yow, fader, that ye will let me it wit,
 W[h]yther schall I have ony harme or noo? (147–48; 153–54; 161–62)

The absolute vulnerability and innocence of the child evokes pathos. When Abraham responds "A, Isaac, Isaac, I must kill the[e]!" (167), the shocked boy retorts,

Kill me, fader? Alasse, w[h]at have I don?
 Iff I have trespassyd agens yow ow[gh]t,
 With a yard ye may make me full mild;
 And with yowr scharp sword kill me nought,
 For iwis, fader, I am but a child. (168–172)

He is right—this is not the way to treat children. Furthermore, there must be an alternative remedy, even if it be beating. Even more evocative is Isaac's humble, if fearful acceptance, "I will never groche, lowd nor still" (191). Besides, he selflessly continues, you have another child or two whom you love, so

... make ye no woo;
 For be I onys ded and from yow goo,
 I schall be sone owt of yowre minde. (200–202)

We watch the boy's mind move from point to point, following his consciousness, fear, and stoic resolution. His only request is not for himself, but, he begs, "tell ye my moder nothing; Sey that I am in another cuntre dwelling" (205–06). The child's generous, selfless spirit makes his plight all the more pathetic. No less anguished is his father's response "Son, thy wordys make me to wepe full sore! Now my dere son Isaac, spek no more" (224–25). He asks only that his father "Smyth but fewe strokys at my hed,/ And make an end as sone as ye may,/ And tery not to[o] long" (230–33). But the prolonged farewell of Abraham's kissing his son, proving his reluctance, only heightens the emotion, as does Isaac's reassurance that Abraham need not bind his arms, for he will not resist. Rather, he encourages the deed with "My fayer swete fader—I geffe yow leve" (254). If children in the drama and other genres are often symbolically offered on the sacrificial altar, little Isaac is placed there literally! This contrasts the voluntary sacrifice of the young peasant girl discussed by David Tinsley in his "Reflections of Childhood in Medieval Hagiographical Writing: The Case of Hartmann's *Der arme Heinrich*" in this volume. As the mourning Abraham bemoans the deed, his son begs

A, mercy, fader, mo[u]rne ye no more!
 Yowre weping make[th] my hart sore
 As my owyn deth that I schall suffere.
 Yowre kerche, fader, abowt my eyn ye wind. (282–85)

Just at the moment of slaughter, an angel miraculously appears to remove Abraham's sword and replace the child with a sacrificial ram, saying "For Isaac, thy yowng son that her[e] is, / This day schall not sched his blood" (326–27). Just as Isaac substituted for Christ, so does the ram, a "jentyll scheppe," for him. This twelfth-hour reprieve, a true salvation from death, is granted the child Isaac, and other literary children whom he epitomizes. Its concluding line reassuringly suggests that "Jesu, that werit[h] the crown of thorne, /[will] Bring us all to hevyn blisse!" (464–65). Thus the play reinforces its comic resolution and signifies a redemptive salvation, a gentler model for the fate of some children elsewhere in medieval texts.

Other Redeemed Children: Amis and Amiloun

Children redemptively saved after dangerous circumstances are more numerous than those slain outright. Amis' unnamed children, "þe fairest þat miȝt bere liue" (1535) in the romance *Amis and Amiloun*,²⁵ play a surprisingly significant role, for by their deaths, they save the desolate Amiloun from the dreaded pain of leprosy. Most of the romance transpires without their agency, as the devoted best friends Amis and Amiloun grow to manhood, marry ambiguously virtuous wives, and prove their capacity to rule kingdoms. When Amis requires the military services of his compatriot, Amiloun complies, but only with the onus of leprosy on his back for deceptively fighting as Amis. When the supernatural agent, the angel-messenger, reports that the children must be killed to save Amiloun from his leprous punishment—unlike Isaac who must be killed because of God's jealous decree—another father will capitulate. The narrator relates:

An angel com fram heuen briȝt
 & stode biforn his bed ful riȝt
 & to him þus gan say:
 ȝif he wald rise on Cristes morn,
 Swiche time as Ihesu Crist was born,
 & slen his children tvay,
 & alien his [broþer] wiþ blode,
 þurch godes grace, þat is so gode,
 His wo schuld wende oway. (2200–08)

The emotionally shocking incident absorbs some two hundred lines, perhaps to acclimate the audience to such an unexpected event. This father's sorrowful reluctance to lose his children parallels Abraham's incredulity, painful resistance and grudging acceptance of Isaac's doom. He indecisively meditates:

Ful bliþ was sir Amis þo,
 Ac for his childer him was ful wo,
 For fairer ner non born.
 Wel loþ him was his childer to slo,
 & wele loþer his broþer forgo. . . .
 þan þouȝt þe douk, wiþ-uten lesing,
 For to slen his childer so ȝing,
 It were a dedli sinne;
 & þan þouȝt he, bi heuen king,
 His broþer out of sorwe bring,
 For þat nold he nouȝt blinne. (2215–19; 2245–50)

²⁵ Leach, *Amis and Amiloun*. Subsequent quotations from *Amis and Amiloun* are from this edition.

So, on Christmas Eve when all were at mass, Amis secretly steals into the nursery with candle and sword to perform his rite. The anguish of this parent perpetrating death on his innocents recalls Abraham's similar distress:

[He] biheld hem boþe to,
 Hou fair þai lay to-gider þo
 & slepe boþ yfere.
 þan seyð him-selue, "Bi Seyn Jon,
 It wer gret reweþe ȝou to slon,
 þat god haþ bouȝt so dere!"
 His kniif he had drawen þat tide,
 For sorwe he sleynt oway biside
 & wepe wiþ reweful chere. (2284–92)

Amis' s obligation to his sworn brother is felt nearly as onerous as Abraham's to God. Unlike Isaac, these children are not spared the knife. But like Isaac, rescued at the last moment, these innocents are miraculously restored to life, albeit after their murder. Amis's grief is substantially lesser than the elderly prophet's, for as his wife reassures him, they can engender more children, while Abraham cannot. As Albrecht Classen has well pointed out in his Introduction, in Konrad von Würzburg's *Engelhard*, such a discussion between husband and wife does not transpire since Engelhard is alone at home, where he reflects upon the conflict between his love for his friend and his love for his children. Yet the stark grotesqueness of the actual murder is even more emotionally shocking than Isaac's putative one, having been enacted with all the blood and gore of a Renaissance revenge tragedy. Their father

. . . hent his kniif wiþ dreri mode
 & tok his children þo;
 For he nold nouȝt spille her blode,
 Ouer a bacine fair & gode
 Her throtes he schar atvo.
 & when he hadde hem boþe slain,
 He laid hem in her bed ogain. (2306–12)

No less gruesome is the smearing of "þat blod þat was so briȝt" (2341) all over the body of Amilion to complete the sacrificial rite. Anticipation builds as the household seeks the missing keys to the nursery, and as Amis requests his wife to enter alone with him. Like Isaac's mother, she has no knowledge of the impending, or real disaster. Having ritually recounted the murder to Amilioun, Amis repeats it to his wife with anguish. But when they finally enter the death-chamber, the babies are joyfully playing together, miraculously restored to their former health. For joy the parents weep. Thus these children are the sacrificial means of restoration for Amilioun, and are themselves supernaturally restored. The focus of the tale rests doubly upon the emotional bond between parents and children

and between Amis and Amiloun, but concern for and restoration of the children is the essential culminating force that makes this tale a romance rather than a tragedy.

The Clerk's Tale

Griselda's children in the *Clerk's Tale* wield a similarly significant narrative power, again as pawns in their perpetrating father's scheme. In this case, they are temporarily sacrificed not to save another, but for Walter's indulgence, to test Griselda's fidelity. When he asks her permission to kill her daughter, Griselda dutifully responds:

My child and I, with hertely obeisaunce,
Ben youre al, and ye mowe save or spille
Youre owene thyng; werketh after youre wille. (IV.502–04)

Her maternal anguish is discerned in her injunction to the servant:

But o thyng wol I prey yow of youre grace,
That, but my lord forbad yow, atte leeste
Burieth this litel body in som place
That beestes ne no briddes it torace. (IV.569–72)

When, despite her loss, Griselda patiently bears a son, Walter's second testing elicits the same obedience:

I wol no thyng, ne nyl no thyng, certayn,
But as yow list. Naught greveth me at al,
Thogh my doghter and my son be slain. (IV.646–48)

Audience sympathy is with Griselda, who believing her offspring dead, suffers pain of loss; sympathy is thus not generated for the children, who in fact are not ultimately harmed. The revelation of their safety after believing them dead for years provokes her fainting, and her joyful tears:

... after hire swownynge
She bothe hire yonge children to hire calleth,
And in hire armes, pitously wepynge,
Embraceth hem, and tendrely kissynge
Ful lyk a mooder, with hire salte teeres
She bathed bothe hire visage and hire heeres. (IV.1080–85)

The children's vulnerability and weakness are highlighted, much as they were in the "slaughter of the innocents" victims, as Griselda laments "O tendre, o deere, o yonge children myne!" (IV.1093) before fainting a second time. Not a dry eye

was left at the celebration, as pity moved the actual and reading audience. Once again, a father is responsible for his children's welfare while a mother remains ignorant of their situation. Ironically, Griselda attributes Walter with saving her children, those who would never have been in jeopardy were it not for him! Since these innocents are only thought dead, their restoration is achieved naturally, without supernatural intervention such as the messenger-angel needed to rescue Isaac. The pattern of harsh fathers, unknowing mothers, and victimized children is repeatedly used for its evocative effect. Here the children play a pivotal narrative role, being the most precious objects of which Walter could deprive Griselda, the most extreme form of testing her loyalty to him, and the means of enacting a joyous culmination after she painfully accedes to his cruel demands.

The Man of Law's Tale

Custance's son in the *Man of Law's Tale* undergoes actual and traumatic peril through the agency of an unnatural grandmother and naive father, thus breaking the format of paternal harshness seen above. The story begins when young Custance, herself no more than a child, pitifully begs her parents not to marry her off and send her half a globe away as an exile in a foreign land. Her words are particularly resonant of her own salvation and redemption as she begs for those graces: "Crist, that starf for our redempcioun / So yeve me grace his heestes to fulfille" (II.283–84). The emotional tenor continues as pity and fear are evoked through her speech:

"Fader," she seyde, "thy wrecched child Custance,
Thy yonge doghter fostred up so softe,
And ye, my mooder, my soverayn plesaunce
Over alle thyng, out-taken Crist on-lofte,
Custance youre child hir recomandeth ofte
Unto youre grace. (II.274–79)

Ironically, Custance, herself a pitiful, abandoned, vulnerable child at the beginning of her tale, and rescued much like Isaac and her own son by the end, is the means of Maurice's survival. Here parental protection, not afforded her, proves his succor, and finally leads to his redemption. The process is a traumatic one. At his very birth, Maurice is threatened by his grandmother Donigeld's interception of letters to her son; she deceitfully describes him as "a feendly creature" (II.751) and destroys Allah's injunction to "Keepeth this child, al be it foul or feir" (II.764). Custance's natural maternal instinct to protect her son is a foil to their callous treatment:

Hir litel child lay wepyng in hir arm,
 And knelynge, pitously to hym she seyde,
 "Pees, litel sone, I wol do thee noon harm."
 With that hir coverchief of hir hed she breyde
 And over his litel eyen she it leyde,
 And in hir arm she lulleth it ful faste,
 And into hevene hire eyen up she caste. (II.834–40)

The emotional tone and Custance's protective gesture heightens Maurice's vulnerability and audience pathos for his plight. Patricia Eberle's notes to the *Riverside Chaucer* mention Bartholomaeus Anglicus' injunction that "children should be protected from bright light, 'for a place that is to bright departith and todelith the sight of the smale eye that bes right ful tendre'" (862, n.837–38). This means of torture of children, of shining extremely bright light in their eyes, reinforces their vulnerability. Lancashire takes this as the explanation for Abraham's covering Isaac's eyes in many cycle plays when preparing to sacrifice him very literally.²⁶ This seems to make perfect sense in the "Clerk's Tale" where Custance is protecting her child from many things, light being one, and lulling him to sleep, darkness being conducive to repose; but it makes less sense in the Isaac story in which Abraham seems to be minimizing Isaac's grief by preventing him from witnessing his own murder. Abraham can hardly be overly concerned with protecting his eyes while sacrificing his body to death.

When the false orders condemn her son to the sea, Custance's maternal anguish inspires prayers to the Virgin who has similarly witnessed her own son's demise. The distraught mother bemoans the innocence of her endangered child, claiming

"O litel child, allas! What is thy gilt,
 That nevere wroghtest synne as yet, pardee?
 Why wil thyn harde fader han thee spilt?" (II.855–57)

Much like Griselda, begging the servant to let her give her usurped children a good-bye kiss, and not to let the beasts and birds feed on her young, with the same pathos Custance begs the servant

As lat my litel child dwelle heere with thee;
 And if thou darst nat saven hym, for blame,
 So kys hym ones in his fadres name!" (II.859–61)

A similar sorrowful resignation, much like Abraham's and even young Isaac's, envelops these mothers. But after five years adrift, Custance and Maurice survive the natural elements. When tossed ashore and attacked by a heathen thief, they are saved through the Virgin Mary's agency. The final fortuitous stroke of luck or

²⁶ Lancashire, "Chaucer and the Sacrifice of Isaac," 324.

providence is Maurice's striking resemblance to Custance, for when Alla journeys to Rome and encounters the lad, he immediately sees his wife's visage. A reunion—joy after woe—much like that of the *Clerk's Tale* ensures the final and permanent safety of mother and son.

Here, not a vituperative father, but the agency of an evil woman, jealous of her daughter-in-law and protective of her Muslim beliefs, is the cause of the conflict. Both daughter-in-law Custance and grandson Maurice must suffer the consequences of her venom, with fate or Divine Providence protecting them from harm. The final restoration of the family through the physical appearance of young Maurice places him at the heart of the story, the most significant narrative agent for reuniting his parents.

Kidnapped children such as Tristan, Arthur, and Horn, later rightfully restored to their proper role form yet another coterie of abused children, albeit not usually by their parents. Although this discussion cannot include all their fates, they too fall into the Abraham-Isaac category of "ultimately redeemed." Some children such as the Pearl maiden in *The Pearl*, little Sir Thopas in Chaucer's *Tale of Sir Thopas*, the *Merchant's Tale's* little girl sitting silently with the wife, and little Owaines in *Amis and Amiloun* of course, fit into neither of these two iconic oppositional paradigms for they do not appear to suffer. The Pearl maiden's function is to advise the obtuse narrator from a privileged vantage point, while Thopas gallops through his romance without much purpose at all—obviously Chaucer's intent for him. The silent little girl in the *Merchant's Tale* similarly claims no particular role beside that of innocent foil to the not-so-innocent wife, although her emotional state might be said to be affected. Child Owaines serves his leprous uncle Amiloun with generous devotion, and suffers his uncle's pain with him, but is himself no victim. But these children are the exceptional few. In most cases of destruction and reclamation of children, audience involvement is ensured through the force of *pitié* evoked for the vulnerable children, often fragile, docile, unknowing victims of fate or fortune, good or evil.

Literary depiction of children owes much to the social situation in which they lived, and a type of accurate, gruesome realism permeates these children's tales. John Boswell indicates that "The first of the authoritative collections of canonical decrees to influence the whole Western church was compiled by Regino of Prüm around 906. It imposes severe penalties for infanticide, for accidental suffocation of infants by parents, and even for the possibility of negligence when a child dies and the parents may not have done everything possible to prevent it."²⁷ The need for such decrees reveals much about the social attitude of the time. By the high Middle Ages, offering children to the church as *oblations*, or to creditors to satisfy

²⁷ Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers*, 222.

debt was not uncommon, as Valerie Garver also points out in contribution to this volume, "The Influence of Monastic Ideals upon Carolingian Conceptions of Childhood."²⁸ Similarly, Boswell, commenting on a Bodleian manuscript miniature (Ms Bodl. 270b, fol. 181), states that starving mothers fighting over whose child they will eat is a "shocking topos occur[ring] with surprising frequency The king, observing the pitiful scene, rends his garments in horror [which] indicates, at the least, concern about the fate of children during periods of social distress."²⁹ Unfortunately that concern did little to alleviate the plight of many children—those dumped in rivers with weights attached to them to assure drowning, those beaten, or ignored. Investigation of literary children, emblemized in medieval drama as doomed or redeemed, concretely reinforces and graphically illustrates the assertion of brutality toward actual children, revealing them as the literary models used to evoke pity—occasionally salvaged, but often unsaved. Two major Middle English prototypical plays, the "Slaughter of the Innocents" and "Abraham and Isaac" well embody these dual treatments afforded many literary children. No doubt the actual social situation was as varied as its constituents—some children were well treated, and others not; but medieval authors, like the sensational media compilers today, often found more interest in scenes of lurid pain and anguish—of children suffering, dying, reaching the brink of disaster, and sometimes being saved. Their dramatic exemplars thus offered sensational material for other genres' emulation in a most pitiful and powerful fashion.

²⁸ For valuable suggestions and comments on various versions of this essay and the paper from which it was originally drawn I would like to thank Albrecht Classen, Robert Feldacker, Tom Noble, and fellow scholars who attended the international symposium on "Childhood in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age," at the University of Arizona (April 30–May 2, 2004).

²⁹ Boswell, *The Kindness of Strangers*, fig. 8, following p. 270.

Daniel F. Pigg

(The University of Tennessee at Martin)

Margery Kempe and Her Son Representing the Discourse of Family

The word “contradiction” is one that can easily be applied to one of late medieval England’s most intriguing women writers: Margery Kempe.¹ Irony abounds in the early fifteenth-century narrative representation of this woman of middle class status. As Ricki Jean Cohn observes, “much of the criticism fails to move far beyond an attempt to establish her authenticity,”² perhaps in part because Kempe continues to surprise readers and to challenge orthodoxy in several areas. As we might expect in a middle class setting, family figures as an important element of plot in her life story, even in a highly symbolic and mystical way, according to Catherine Akel.³ Yet at the same time, Kempe and the clerical recorder of her autobiography balance that image of medieval mother with that of seemingly autonomous individual—one who becomes a prophet, intercessor, perhaps even a preacher who does not enter a pulpit.

The “contradiction” at the heart of *The Book of Margery Kempe* is that the narrative representation both reaffirms and denies those same elements of connectedness with family and autonomy. Such is a part of the mystery of Margery Kempe that pushes the boundaries of normality and challenges the limits of discourse to represent them. Such complexity in *The Book of Margery Kempe* has piqued the interest of scholars as diverse as David Aers, Lynn Staley Johnson, Kathleen Ashley, and Carolyn Dinshaw, who have attempted to account for the contradictions through critical approaches ranging from new historicism and feminism to

¹ For all text references to *The Book of Margery Kempe*, see *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed., Stanford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen. EETS, o.s. 212 (London: Oxford University Press, 1940).

² Ricki Jean Cohn, “God and Motherhood in the *Book of Margery Kempe*,” *Studia Mystica* 9, 1 (1986): 26–35.

³ Catherine S. Akel, “Familial Structure in the Religious Relationships and Visionary Experiences of Margery Kempe,” *Studia Mystica* 16 (1995): 116–32.

queer theory.⁴ Almost all of these scholars confirm the strangeness of Kempe. Perhaps less "strange" than her mystical experiences and roarings are her domestic relationships, particularly those with her husband, including their marital negotiations and her subsequent care of him in old age. These domestic connections have received considerable scholarly treatment. Yet her relationship with her son, having received less attention, actually becomes a more important prism for examining the conflation of spiritual and secular worlds that Sarah Beckwith notes is an important element in the Kempe characterization.⁵

Book Two, an often less examined portion of the *Book*, narrates Margery's relationship with her son through several important lenses: the mercantile, the familial, and the religious. Such a relationship becomes a revealing element relative to the economy of religious practice for which Kempe is valorized throughout the entire narrative. As Karen Winstead notes, such a portion of the narrative involving her son "may have been [added] to assure readers that she is not the anti-family radical that so many of her detractors in Book I accuse her of being."⁶ On another level, Winstead notes that the events of her son's life so closely parallel those of Kempe's own life that she serves as a conversion example for her son.⁷ Both views are certainly pertinent to the present investigation of *The Book of Margery Kempe*, but they require deeper probing into the problematic space of the narrative. Seen in these ways, the family does become important, but at a much more discursive level that does not dismiss the importance of the actual emotional and familial bonding that we also find in other medieval texts. For Kempe and her recorder, this "appendix" to Book One serves as a telling example of Kempe's maternal and intercessory role, seen most clearly in the coda-like ending where she offers prayers for all people in all times.⁸

Scholars have long observed that the writer of her text is attempting to fashion a narrative that resembles certain elements found in a saint's life narrative, a form that was itself undergoing radical revision in the late Middle Ages as David

⁴ David Aers, *Sanctifying Signs: Making Christian Tradition in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2004); Lynn Staley Johnson, "Margery Kempe: Social Critic," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 21, 2 (1992): 197–209; Kathleen Ashley, "Historicizing Margery: The Book of Margery Kempe as Social Text," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 28, 2 (1998): 371–88; Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999).

⁵ Sarah Beckwith, "A Very Material Mysticism: The Medieval Mysticism of Margery Kempe," in *Medieval Literature: Criticism, Ideology, and History*, ed., David Aers (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 34–57.

⁶ Karen A. Winstead, "The Conversion of Margery Kempe's Son," *English Language Notes* 32, 2 (1994): 9–13.

⁷ Winstead, "The Conversion," 12.

⁸ Wendy Harding, "Medieval Women's Unwritten Discourse on Motherhood: A Reading of Two Fifteenth-Century Texts," *Women's Studies* 21, 2 (1992): 197–209.

Herlihy has observed.⁹ Kathleen Ashley calls the *Book of Margery Kempe* an example of "failed hagiography"—one never officially authorized by the Church—yet it is in the gap that exists between normal life in the lay piety tradition and the hagiographic tradition that Kempe's text assumes its position of power.¹⁰ Seen as a discourse—the "discernible praxis of thinking"—family becomes part of that trope, and Kempe's son, although briefly mentioned in two chapters of Book Two, is necessary to the economics of religious middle class devotion.¹¹

This essay asserts that what on the surface seems to be a brief digression filling in a part of Kempe's life not included in Book One becomes a significant element in the narrative construction of character, family, and value. Its inclusion goes much beyond an attempt to catalog another narrative moment in her life.

I

What is the discourse that we call "medieval family life?" The last decade has seen significant challenges to the landmark work of Philippe Aries's *Centuries of Childhood* by historians such as Barbara Hanawalt and Shulamith Shahar.¹² Still old theories persist, and the official history gives us very little to go on. Thus David Herlihy, drawing upon the work of Ariès notes, "medieval parents did not recognize their children to be children, and did not respond emotionally to their special qualities."¹³ Yet he counters this position with reference to the body of saints' lives that place family connections and the intimacy of family life as an important trope that must reveal something about actual family feeling. Such a statement that Herlihy quotes and then rejects reflects a particular critical approach to sources that treats them as transparent or as a "parasitic reflector" of external reality—a critique made by the New Historicists. Jean E. Howard, speaking of the force of the first wave of New Historicism in Renaissance/Early Modern studies, challenges the traditional association between historical records and literature in these ways:

⁹ David Herlihy, *Medieval Households* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 112–30.

¹⁰ Ashley, "Historicizing Margery," 371.

¹¹ Timothy J. Reiss, *The Discourse of Modernism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 9.

¹² Phillippe Aries, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, Trans. From the French by Robert Baldick (1960; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962); Barbara A. Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London: The Experience of Childhood in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1990).

¹³ Herlihy, *Medieval Households*, 112.

These assumptions include the following: that history is knowable; that literature mirrors or at least by indirection reflects historical reality; and that historians and critics can see the facts objectively.¹⁴

In literary texts, we see a different notion of embedded history, precisely the one that scholars such as Barbara A. Hanawalt, Nicole Clifton, and Nicholas Orme, not to mention this collection of essays, have explored and from which they have concluded that court cases and wills that "show a high degree of trust and affection."¹⁵ Official documents, however, do not reveal the entire picture.¹⁶

Again, however, historians are not likely to be able to help us understand the subtle dance and negotiation of relationships that were most certainly a part of medieval life, and in particular, those encoded as a type of history in Kempe's *Book*. The "history" of Kempe's *Book* is hardly the grand narrative of "History," but it is a history of one woman's and one family's relationship turned into "fiction." Historical studies, however, do provide certain emerging patterns in the late medieval period concerning middle class life that might help us to establish a connection with some larger social patterns that might have driven the scribe's need for including the domestic discourse regarding Kempe's son. In the medieval as in the modern world, the family was an important semiotic system that underlies the social fabric as a discernable unit, an economic institution, and the name of an important discourse as recent research and all contributions to this volume have confirmed.

That the family was important to a mystical discourse has been noted by Herlihy in general by recourse to saints' narratives and in the studies of Karma Lochrie and Catherine Akel, in particular regarding Kempe.¹⁷ Some of the more general trends, however, which Herlihy notes have not been investigated in terms of the Kempe's autobiography and will be considered in this essay. Several trends deserve consideration. As Robert Hodge and Gunter Kress comment, a system such as the family is always open to change and redefinition as the concept of family changes in texts that represent it, whether written, oral, learned, or seemingly unconscious.¹⁸ By the late Middle Ages, several textual changes in the genre of the

¹⁴ Jean E. Howard, "The New Historicism in Renaissance Studies," *Renaissance Historicism*, ed. Arthur F. Kinney and Dan S. Collins (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 3–33.

¹⁵ Hanawalt, *Growing Up*, p. 218. See also Nicole Clifton, "The Function of Childhood in *Amis and Amiloun*," *Mediaevalia* 22, 1 (1998): 35–57; see also Clifton's contribution to this volume; Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 317–21.

¹⁶ Albrecht Classen's introduction to this collection and Jean Jost's essay discuss this concept further.

¹⁷ Herlihy, *Medieval Households*, 112–30; Karma Lockrie, *Margery Kempe and the Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991); Akel, "Familial Structure," 116–32.

¹⁸ Robert Hodges and Gunter Kress, *Social Semiotics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 205–06.

narrative of the saint were observable. Herlihy notes three in particular: the movement in setting from rural to urban, the increase in the percentage of female representation in the narrative, and the rise of mystical experience.¹⁹ All of these developments make possible the development of Kempe as a "saint" and the role of family as a key to her experience.

Family became an important trope in textual tradition of the saint's life, although there is a greater tendency to use it as a metaphor with less fixed cultural values, but with a strong "familial sentiment" in a more traditional sense. In saints' lives of the period, important social phenomena appear. In terms of the relative ages of husbands and wives, the husbands are often older and are seen as becoming blocking figures to the social and economic happiness of sons. Mothers, hence closer in age to the children, often serve as intermediary figures and were also seen as responsible for the spiritual teaching of the children. Thus "the spiritual families led by holy women, who were sources of divine knowledge and exhortation to religious perfection, imitated the natural family, where presumably mothers assumed a comparably less visible role in the religious training of children."²⁰ To what extent these historical norms reflect the "real history" of Margery Kempe is impossible for us to know, given that her history is redacted, translated, and filtered through the domains of a discourse that attempts to find a place for Kempe in the medieval religious economy. What is clear is that the relationship between Kempe and her son is intended to reflect the all-important role of mother as religious teacher.²¹

II

In the Prologue to the *Book*, the second scribe records words that become increasingly important as we probe the structural design and intention of the narrative. He writes:

Thys boke is not wretyn in ordyr, euery thyng aftyr oþer as it wer don, but lych as þe mater cam to þe creatur in mend whan it schuld be wryten, for it was so long er it was wretyn þat sche had for-getyn þe tyme & þe ordyr whan thyngys befellyn.²²

With regard to these remarks, Cheryl Glenn suggests that the form of the text is "cyclical and associational,"²³ but, as she notes, there is a sense of forward

¹⁹ Herlihy, *Medieval Households* 113–14.

²⁰ Herlihy, *Medieval Households* 123.

²¹ For further discussion of the role of mothers as religious teachers, see Juanita Feros Ruys's and Eva Parra Membrives's essays in this volume.

²² Kempe, *Book*, 5.

²³ Cheryl Glenn, "Reexamining the *Book of Margery Kempe*: A Rhetoric of Autobiography," *Reclaiming*

progression. With the beginning of Book Two, the scribe records his connections with Book One and opens this book with material that has not been narrated in Book One—the experience between Kempe and her son. It is different in tone and style from Book One, yet the experience did actually happen within the chronology of events in Book One as narrated in Chapter Seventy-Six, where upon an accident of her husband and his increasing age she takes care of him for the rest of his life. In Chapter Two of Book Two, there is a reference to the death of John Kempe shortly after the sudden death of their son. On one level it seems surprising that both events are not narrated together. If the intention of the scribe was to show Kempe's familial spirit, it might seem to follow narrative logic that he would have included Kempe's caring for both her husband and son at the same time or that her communications with her son, his falling into debauchery, his marriage, and his desire to see his mother again were not framed within the context of their existing family chronology. Such, however, is not the narratologic or *forma tractandi* at work.

The discursive bundles—Kempe's marital negotiations and her attempts to authenticate her religious experience through recourse to church officials—that underlie Book One seem more directed toward valorizing the spiritual vision of Kempe, her negotiations with her husband in the mercantile world of "bourgeois ideology,"²⁴ and the negotiations between Kempe and her scribes in the production, commodification, and representation of her life. Of course, it could be argued that Kempe might not have "remembered" that the events occurred at the same time, but it seems beyond our belief that the events of death coming in such close proximity would have been forgotten. The possible answer seems to lie more in the nature of narrative and the way in which the discourse of family, particularly parental concerns, can be useful in shaping the perception of Kempe.

In Book Two, we again see the interplay of multiple discourses: the bourgeois, the religious, and familial discourses. For the bourgeois family of Kempe's status, sons in apprenticeships often left home in their early teens, and Nicholas Orme has discovered texts that illustrate such a departure could be filled with tears.²⁵ While it is impossible to know exactly how old Kempe's son is in *The Book*, we do know that typically a young man entered an apprenticeship at age fourteen, and records show that he often remained for a period of nine to twelve years, if not more.²⁶ For Kempe's son, the departure would not have meant the end of childhood, because in a very real way he would have been "adopted" into the family of "a worschep-

Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition, ed., Andrea Lunsford (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), 53–71.

²⁴ Ashley, "Historicizing Margery," 373.

²⁵ Orme, *Medieval Children*, 317–18.

²⁶ Hanawalt, *Growing Up*, 135.

ful burgeys in Lynn."²⁷ We might ask about the whereabouts of John Kempe during this time. Given that historical records tend to show that husbands were often older than their wives, it is possible that John Kempe may have arranged an apprenticeship for his son earlier in his life before declining health was present. Margery Kempe herself was apparently taking care of John Kempe, who was experiencing senility, when their son and his wife came to visit. Hanawalt has found considerable evidence for such a practice of establishing apprenticeships early, based on a parent's fear of mortality.²⁸ Thus it is perhaps less surprising that he is absent from the scene. Coupled with the discursive pattern in late medieval saints' lives which places mothers as teacher figures of moral action, Margery Kempe's role is all the more textualized. We do well to remember the impact of multiple kinds of texts on the form and content of Kempe's *Book*, a commonplace in scholarship.

Historically we know that an apprentice enjoyed what Thrupp, Hanawalt, Orme, and Shahar call a kind of familial relationship, living often in the same house with the master's family.²⁹ Abiding by the rules of the house, the apprentice was not to engage in sexual relations with "anyone at the master's house," was not to marry without the master's consent, and was to avoid drinking and gaming.³⁰ That such provisions were in place in the contractual agreement shows not only the seriousness of these illicit behaviors, but also their apparent presence as social issues during the apprenticeship period. Thrupp notes that among merchants—the occupation to which Kempe's son is aspiring admission—the consideration of marriage partner was very important as it was tied to securing "capital for a merchant's business."³¹ Kempe's specific warning to her son to avoid contact with women, then, is a double reinforcement of mercantile and familial-based discourse, derived from different sources, but yielding the same intention.

Yet at the same time that the mercantile discourse of responsibility and curbed access to debauchery and Kempe's own religious and familial discourse seem to merge, Kempe opens an attack on the dangers of materialism. The narrative relates that

[S]che desyryd (hym) to a drawyn owt of þe perellys of þis wretchyd & vnstabyll world
 ȝyf hir power myht a teynynd þerto. Neuyr-þe-lesse sche dede as meche as in hir was,
 &, whan sche myht metyn with hym at leyser, many tymys sche counselyd hym to

²⁷ Kempe, *Book*, 221.

²⁸ Hanawalt, *Growing Up*, 132.

²⁹ Sylvia Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300–1500* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), 165–69; Hanawalt, *Growing Up*, 135–38; Orme, *Medieval Children*, 312–13; Shahar, *Childhood*, 226–28.

³⁰ Hanawalt, *Growing Up*, 135–36; Orme, *Medieval Children*, 312–13; Shahar, *Childhood*, 226–28.

³¹ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, 29.

leeuyn þe worlde & folwyn Crist in so meche þat he fled hyr cumpany & would not gladly ch metyn wyth hir.³²

The very means of securing his economic success in the world becomes the means of temptation much as it did for Perkyn Revelour in Chaucer's "Cook's Tale." The world of the merchant, itself, was not opposed to religious devotion. In fact, the guild system had embedded spiritual dimensions. Perhaps related to her own economic success, pride, and subsequent financial ruin in brewing, Kempe rejects all materialism as opposed to spiritual gains. Thus she encourages him to reject the world that also rejected her. As a result, her son rejects her, and she warns him about sexual contact with women outside of marriage. Then in what must be a shocking moment, Kempe says "I pray God chastise þe and ponysch þe þerfor."³³ The words must strike readers as lacking compassion—something about which even Kempe's friends intercede with her. The point of the narrative, however, is to place Kempe in a position of the rejecting parent so that she can become on another level his later intercessor. Rather than showing coldness, the text shows her orthodox stance even in the face of emotional attachment.

His subsequent trip, falling into lechery, his disfigurement, and return home yield exactly what master/apprenticeship practices provide: the contract is broken. The two discourses of the mercantile world and Kempe's religious sphere of authority again combine. While in the service of his master on the continent, he becomes entrapped in the world of lecherous desire, with the effect that he develops a condition like leprosy—an outward manifestation of the fulfillment of private sexual desire. In the biblical tradition itself, leprosy was equated with sin of any kind. His return to Lynn only complicates the issue further, for he is dismissed from his apprenticeship contract. His master dismisses him because he believes he is a leper—an example of his lack of "self control"—a key element that apprenticeship was intended to foster as the adolescent moved into adulthood.³⁴ Apprenticeship contracts also required that a youth be "without deformities,"³⁵ thus Kempe's son had done something that would allow for the master to break the contract. It was simply good business sense on one level; on another, it was a public recognition that he had failed in a real way to abide by the rules of his "adopted family" setting. At times, the punishments for such activities might have been levied with fines³⁶ or perhaps a kind of public humiliation, such as one that Thrupp notes occurred in 1382 in which an apprentice who violated the rules of sexual chastity was given a "ceremonial flogging in the company hall, inflicted by

³² Kempe, *Book*, 221.

³³ Kempe, *Book*, 222.

³⁴ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, 169.

³⁵ Hanawalt, *Growing Up*, 139.

³⁶ Hanawalt, *Growing Up*, 140.

masked men.”³⁷ Kempe’s son is not subjected to public humiliation in this way, but he does identify his mother’s placing a kind of curse on him as the basis of his leprosy. Margery Kempe’s response to these events is to modern perceptions surprising. The narrator records that

Sum persone, hauyng knowlach of hys compleynt & compassyon of hys disese, cam to hys modyr, seying sche had sone ryth euyl, for thorw hir prayer God had takyn veniawns on hir owyn childe. Sche, takyng lityl heed of her wordys, let it passyn forth as sche had mad no fors tyl he would comyn & preyin for grace hys-self.³⁸

The point of Book Two, however, seems to place Margery Kempe as a kind of “secular priest” who prays for all. In that sense, Kempe is assuming almost a priestly role here that connects with other portion of her narrative. Throughout the narrative, Kempe herself has had vexed relations with clergy, and in Book Two, her failure to tell her confessor that she is leaving England to take her daughter-in-law back home results in his being unwilling to see her at first. Kempe’s response to her son should be seen in a similar way. It is not so much that she lacks compassion for him as she sees a need for him to learn a powerful lesson about life itself. Upon his confession to her, she does pray for him, and their previous relationship is restored. That others see her as responsible for his leprosy-like condition should be understood in the context that the crowd is always skeptical of her behavior and actions rather than seeing her as a cruel parent. In a larger sense, she shows tremendous compassion. In a real and emotional way, she is bound to him the rest of his life. Upon his confession, the narrator notes that

Whan sche cam to hir meditacyon, not for₃etyng þe frute of hir womb, [sche] askyd for₃euenes of hys synne & relesyng of þe sekenes þat owr Lord had ₃ouyn hym ₃yf it wer hys plesawns & profite to hys sowle. So longe sche preyid þat he was clene delyueryd of þe sekenes and leuyd many ₃erys aftyr & had a wife & a childe.³⁹

Even the narrator uses the term “frute of hir womb” to suggest the almost essentialist based connection between mother and child. Clearly, this Margery Kempe is not negligent of either her motherly –and perhaps even more important for the scribe—her intercessory duties. The narrative brings both roles to the fore in a single moment of concern.

The next communications come with the announcement of his marriage and the birth of a child, and plans for a visit to England. Both spiritual and familial harmony have been restored. After the couple arrives, Kempe’s son becomes ill after eating dinner and dies one month later. The coming of the son and daughter-

³⁷ Thrupp, *Merchant Class*, 169.

³⁸ Kempe, *Book*, 222.

³⁹ Kempe, *Book*, 223.

in-law to England sets in motion another important discursive bundle that compliments Kempe's *Book* and familial discourse. Her connection with her daughter-in-law is significant as she accompanies her back to Danzig (today Gdansk), enjoys additional pilgrimage sites, and encounters hosts of detractors, including even that same daughter-in-law. Throughout all of these, however, Kempe shows that her spiritual dimension is strong as is her desire to fulfill familial obligations.

So far we have concentrated on the material ways in which cultural practices reify the interactions between Kempe and her son. Such is the material basis for a discourse. Kempe on one level appears standoffish and removed from the situation, but on a far deeper level, she may see her life's story developed in *Book One*, played out through her son, as a discourse. Denis Renevey notes that Kempe in the events of the Passion is attempting a "literary inscription"⁴⁰ as a way of engaging the historical moment. She inserts herself into the historical moment of the first-century A.D. Crucifixion experience in *Book One* just as she is writing herself into her son's life as mother, prophet, confessor, and intercessor. What I would argue is that in a very direct way the narrative moment recorded in *Book Two* relating to Kempe and her son is another entrance of Kempe, but perhaps even at a deeper level of the text. At once she is retelling her own experience—her fortunes in business, spiritual wandering, and reunion—and Kempe's son is reliving her experience. The effect is a triumph of narrative in which her participation just as in the Passion sequence of *Book One* is significant. Coming into her autonomous own through the discourse of family, and combining that discourse with institutional material discourses associated with the world of mercantilism, she becomes the voice to show the importance of family and not-family at the same time. She simultaneously breaks and embraces family and gives it a new sense of meaning. The scribe of *Book Two* is beginning his preparation of Kempe as an intercessor, first for the revived experience of self, second through her contact with her son and his renewal, and finally to the wider circle of all human beings for whom she mediates. Family exists within and without, and that is exactly why the interlocking discourse of family is vital to the meaning of *Book Two*, the portion of the narrative that has received less critical attention. Family is material; family is discourse; and family is ultimately caught up with the person that Kempe and her son are in the process of becoming.

An examination of the relationship between Margery Kempe and her son opens a significantly new way of understanding the enigma that Kempe was and remains for readers. The conflicting emotions of Kempe's apparent dismissal and

⁴⁰ Denis Renevey, "Margery's Performing Body: The Translation of Late Medieval Discursive Religious Practices," *Writing Religious Women: Female Spiritual and Textual Practices in Late Medieval England*, ed., Denis Renevey and Christiania Whitehead (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 197–216.

rejection of her son becoming those of supplication and joy show the complexity of human relationships that this collection of essays has sought to illumine. Kempe can by no means be called an indifferent parent. Her connection with him works on two levels. He is, on one level, the son whom she bore—the only one that apparently lived to adulthood, at least as far as the narrative reveals. On a second level, he is one who experiences a rejection and a reunion with his chief advocate and mediator before his Creator. Throughout the encounter, her relationship with her son is filled with emotional intensity as is his relationship with her. That the scribe chose to place this extended episode at the start of Book Two shows the importance of emotional intensity to human relationships, and that emotional intensity continues to broaden until Kempe becomes the intercessor of the entire human family. Making the relationship of Kempe and her son the cornerstone of Book Two could hardly be incidental, and it is indeed more than a coda to Kempe's role as mother, "saint," and human being. Kempe comes into her own through the experience with her son.

Juliann Vitullo

(Arizona State University, Tempe)

Fashioning Fatherhood: Leon Battista Alberti's Art of Parenting

Although only the first book of Alberti's fifteenth-century dialogue *I libri della famiglia* focuses on the art of raising children, one could argue that the whole structure of the dialogue depends on the subject. In the text Lorenzo Alberti is in his death bed waiting for his brother Riccardo to arrive so that he can entrust his sons to him and be assured that his brother will guide them to become good and virtuous men. What disturbs him about dying is that he has not completed the important task of raising his sons; he emphasizes the real work involved in active parenting by describing it as an "incarco" (responsibility), "soma" (burden) and "fatica" (a hard job).¹ All these terms emphasize that the raising of children is a weighty, strenuous responsibility. Fatherhood is the first "family" matter that the Alberti men discuss in the fictional dialogue, but even when they are not directly addressing the subject, the dialogue itself serves as an important model for how fathers should teach their sons with both reason and passion. As the elder Lorenzo lies sick in bed, the Alberti patriarchs discuss diverse domestic topics with younger family members, illustrating three of Alberti's central points about parenting: 1) children's development into happy, active adults depends not only on their own individual characteristics but on how those qualities evolve in relationships with others, 2) fathers must spend intimate time with their children observing, playing and talking so that their children will learn how to create strong relationships within the larger communities, and 3) that fathers also benefit from their relationships with children because they allow them to express strong emotions and passion.

Whether designing the new facciata for Santa Maria Novella or writing a dialogue on the family, Leon Battista Alberti began to fashion his own work by studying carefully classical models. Although Alberti's text on family and

¹ Leon Battista Alberti, *I libri della famiglia*, ed. Ruggiero Romano and Alberto Tenenti (Turin: Einaudi, 1980), 15–17.

fatherhood draws heavily from both Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* and the pseudo-Aristotelian *Oeconomica*, he adapted the tradition of the household dialogue to address concerns of his own contemporaries about the future of important families in mercantile urban centers of Northern Italy during difficult times of economic, political and social change.²

In book three of his dialogue, which focuses on the domestic economy and closely follows Xenophon's text, Alberti, through the words of the patriarch Giannozzo, reiterates a purely classical ideal of the citizen-farmer who devotes most of his time to the running of his own estate in order to provide himself, his family, and his city with long-term security. Xenophon's dialogue clearly states that ideal citizens should be farmers because they provide the necessities for life, and are physically strong and thus able to defend their city. He contrasts the work of farmers to artisans and declares that craftsmen make weaker citizens because they are used to sitting and thus would probably not possess the necessary virility and courage to defend their cities: "... if the farmers were to be separated from the craftsmen and asked whether they preferred to defend the land or to retreat from the open country to guard the city walls. We thought that in such a situation those who are occupied with the land would vote to defend it, but the craftsmen would vote not to fight but to remain sitting down, as they have been trained to do, and to avoid exertion and danger."³ Paradoxically Alberti takes a classical tradition that is extremely concerned with notions of virility and hierarchy, and uses it to suggest that the skills related to the manual arts and to the new mercantile economy can help maintain a household and that patriarchs should express their manliness by paying more attention to the domestic routine, especially the raising of their children. By focusing on fatherhood, Alberti also stresses the importance of emotion not just reason or physical power in the development of both the family and the city.

In book I, Alberti lists the different duties of the head of a household: "... quale dee pesare più al padre, o la bottega, lo stato, la mercatantia, o il bene e salvamento del figliuolo?"⁴ [What must weigh more for a father, his business, the state, possessions, or the welfare and safety of his son?] The patriarch poses this rhetorical question to emphasize that the rearing of children was indeed men's

² For an important study of the influence of this classical tradition on Alberti, see Massimo Danzi, "Fra *oikos* e *polis*: il pensiero familiare di Leon Battista Alberti," *La memoria e la città, scritture storiche tra Medioevo ed età moderna*, ed. Claudia Bastia e Maria Bolognani (Bologna: Il Nove, 1995), 47–62; here 56; Id., "Leon Battista Alberti e le 'strutture' del discorso familiare fra Medioevo e Rinascimento," *Versants: Revue Suisse des Littératures Romanes/Rivista Svizzera di Letterature Romanze/Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Romanische Literaturen* 38 (2000): 61–77.

³ Sarah B. Pomeroy, ed., Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*: A Social and Historical Commentary (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1994), 135.

⁴ Alberti, *I libri*, 63.

work, but the metaphor he uses to express this notion suggests Alberti's own interest in including the skills of a merchant and of an artisan in his humanistic dialogue. He uses a mercantile metaphor "pesare" to suggest that citizens balance different kinds of work and responsibility. Alberti's world of mercantile craft and trade considered the process of weighing or gauging materials an important skill for many professions including painters.⁵ Here he uses the term "to weigh" to suggest that raising children is truly hard work and also to emphasize that a patriarch best balances his responsibilities if he first focuses on his most important possessions, his offspring. He then goes on to underscore that men's traditional duties outside of the home, including the protection and prosperity of their family and city, make sense only if they first guarantee that their male offspring will be able to fulfill the same responsibilities.

Following closely the model of Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, Alberti stresses that a man's most important role is to take care of his possessions or his *masserizia*. The patriarch Giannozzo defines this activity in book 3: "Dissi io la masserizia sta in bene adoperare le cose non manco che in conservarle . . ." ⁶ [I said that *masserizia* is not just conserving things but also using them well] This definition allows Alberti to discuss "fare masserizia" or conserving in both very concrete and abstract terms. He advises younger men to "far masserizia" of both their mind and their body, and especially of their time.⁷ This notion is illustrated well in the first quotation I read about the different duties that weigh on a man. The best way for a man to "far masserizia" of his time is to make raising children his first priority. Alberti's notion that a father's pedagogical role in his house is a key element of a good mercantile strategy is complemented by the description of parenting as an art in which careful observation, composition, and proportion play important roles. The first step for a man who wants to take his role of father seriously is to observe carefully the disposition, natural abilities and weaknesses of his sons. In his treatise, *On Painting*, Alberti encourages an artist "to be wide awake with his eyes" so that he can remember the detail of bodies and movements such as "how graceful are the hanging legs of him who is seated."⁸ In a similar fashion, Alberti

⁵ One example of the importance of this skill is the genre of mercantile manuals that focus almost exclusively on how different cities weigh different materials, see Cesare Ciano, ed. *La 'Pratica de mercantura' datiniana* (Milan: Dott. A. Giuffrè, 1964). The art historian Michael Baxandall writes: "It is an important fact of art history that commodities have come regularly in standard-sized containers only since the nineteenth century: previously a container — the barrel, sack or bale — was unique, and calculating its volume quickly and accurately was a condition of business." See his *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 86.

⁶ Alberti, *I libri*, 63.

⁷ Alberti, *I libri*, 63–65.

⁸ Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, trans. John R. Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 92.

suggests that even from the first day of life, a child shows his natural character and disposition but it is the responsibility of the father to observe and remember even the smallest details of his son's movements:

...e' parvuli, quando e' ti veggono così grillare colle mani, allora se vi badano, se vi si destano, dimostrano essere composti alli essercizii virili e all'arme. E se più loro piace que' versi e canti co' quali si sogliono ninnare e acquietare, significa che sono nati all'ozio e riposo delle lettere e alle scienze.

[... children, when they see you agitate with your hands, if they then pay attention and rouse themselves, they show that they are made for virile exercises and for arms. And if they like more those poems and songs with which you put them to sleep and quiet them, it means that are born for the leisure and repose of letters and science.]⁹

A father must not only distinguish a child's abilities but also help develop them so they are useful for others: "la natura stessa dal primo dì che qualunque cosa esce in luce abbia loro iniunte e interserte certe note e segno potentissimi e manifesti, co' quali porgono sì tale che gli uomini possono conoscerle quanto bisogna e saperle usare in quelle utilità siano state create" [Nature herself also seems to have boned and incorporated in things, from the first day that they see the light, clear indications and manifest signs by which they fully declare their character. Men are able, therefore, to recognize and use them according to the uses for which they were created].¹⁰ The father, then, must not only distinguish the child's natural inclinations but then adjust the child's activities and environment as well as the style of discipline to his own observations of his child's behavior, using praise and examples rather than punishment whenever necessary.

The idea that children's behavior and activities were important to observe and study is apparent in other texts of the period as well. The preacher Giovanni Dominici believed that children needed to pretend to perform the roles they would play as adults.¹¹ He also suggests that the toys children play with will influence their professions; boys who play with swords will become violent while those who play with cards might become gamblers.¹² A visual representation of this intense interest in children's play is an unusual portrait by Giovanni Francesco Caroto, a Veronese painter who worked at the beginning of the sixteenth century in Northern Italy. Unlike other children's portraits of the period, the purpose of the painting is not to show the status and wealth of the youth's family by focusing on the child's luxurious clothes, but rather to display the satisfaction of the child in

⁹ Alberti, *I libri*, 55. Trans. Renée Neu Watkins, *The Family in Renaissance Florence* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1969), 61.

¹⁰ Alberti, *I libri*, 57. Trans. Watkins, *The Family*, 60.

¹¹ Beato Giovanni Dominici, *Regola del governo di cura familiare*, ed. Donato Salvi (Florence: Angiolo Garinel Libraio, 1860), 146–47.

¹² Dominici, *Regola*, 145.

his own work. The child looks directly at the viewers and interacts with them by sharing his drawing of a figure with a gleeful smile. Like Alberti's treatise, this painting focuses on children's play as a subject worthy of adults' attention. The self-reflexive portrait within the portrait also makes yet another connection between a child's play and an adult's profession. This visually represents Alberti's idea that fathers need to carefully observe children's actions so that they can help guide them to a proper profession for their abilities and temperament.

Like other male pedagogues of the period, Alberti recognized the importance of honoring a child's natural character and talent, and yet also stressed reconciling an individual's natural inclinations with the needs of Florence's collectives, especially the family and the Commune. In discussing how fathers should help their sons choose a profession, Alberti has one of his characters list all the factors a man should consider:

" . . . quale arte, quale scienza, qual vita più si confaccia alla natura del figliuolo, al nome della famiglia, al costume della terra, alle fortune, a' tempi e condizione presenti, alle occasioni, alle aspettazioni de' cittadini"

[. . . which trade, which way of life is appropriate for his son's natural character, his family's reputation, his land's customs, his fortunes, the present time and circumstances, the opportunities, and the citizens' expectations].¹³

Alberti's list of paternal considerations emphasizes the complexity of a father's responsibility to help a son choose an art. Diligently observing a child's natural inclinations is just the first step since a father must also think in terms of composition or how his child will interact with other figures in the diverse planes of Florence's culture. Since the son will one day be a father and citizen himself, the patriarch must think about his son's need to develop skills that will allow him to interact with and lead people within different social groups and communities. As in his treatise on painting, Alberti suggests that fathers must also think about how the "parts fit together" in the *istoria* of his family and city.¹⁴ Alberti's notion of child development is relational in the sense that he understands that children do not just transform into adults as individuals but in a complex network of relationships. According to Alberti's art of parenting a father should not only observe and nurture a child's own individual qualities and talents, but also imagine how the child will interact with others both inside and outside the family. Alberti reiterates this concept later when he asserts that every boy should learn a profession that he can perform "con sua industria e mani" or with his own labor

¹³ Alberti, *I libri*, 49. Trans. Watkins, *The Family*, 56.

¹⁴ Alberti, *On Painting*, 72.

and hands even if his father is rich and noble.¹⁵ Once again, this advice clearly defies the classical tradition of household treatises that Alberti is imitating.

In a moving description of his deceased ten-year-old son, Giovanni Morelli, a merchant and contemporary of Alberti, emphasized how his little boy's skills had earned him the love of different groups within the community:

Piacca a Lui avere posto fine all'affanno, fatiche e passioni, che a mio parere portò al mondo insino dall sua puerizia. La quale, da se istessi, nel tempo d'anni quattro, volle ire a bottega, in sei seppe il Saltero, in otto il Donadello; e seppe iscrivere per modo mandava lettere di sua mano a' nipoti o alla madre quando erano in villa Avea buona memoria, buona lingua, buona ritenitiva, buono aspetto e gentile e costumato La perdita di questo figliuolo fu dolore inistimabile al padre e alla madre: eziandio fu dolore a' parenti suoi che 'l conoscevano e a' vicini, al maestro suo, agli scolari, a' contadini e alla famiglia di casa, e così a tutti quelli che 'l conoscevano e che l'aveano mai veduto.¹⁶

[May it be pleasing to Him to have ended the pain, suffering and torment that in my view he carried in this world through his childhood. He himself at the age of four wanted to go to the store, at six learned the Psalter, and at eight Latin grammar (il Donadello); and he knew how to write well enough to send letters written by his own hand to his cousins and to his mother when they were in the country He had a good memory, good speech, good retention, good appearance, and was noble and polite The loss of this son was of inestimable sorrow to the father and mother: it was also a sorrow for his relatives who knew him and to his neighbors, his teacher, his fellow students, to the peasants and servants, and also to all those who knew him or who had ever seen him.]¹⁷

Morelli quickly moves from praising his son's skills with language and social skills to remarking how those abilities helped him to gain the respect of many different groups within the community. Although Morelli did not develop a pedagogical theory like Alberti, it is clear that he also shared a relational notion of a child's development in which Florentines did not view children's development just as individuals but as figures within a complex composition of different social planes.

In order to form bonds with others and learn social skills, Alberti argues that children need to avoid "solitudine" and "ozio."¹⁸ They need to spend their time talking with others and developing virtuous skills. As the entire dialogue illustrates, the most valuable gift that fathers can give their children is "i ricordi e

¹⁵ Alberti, *I libri*, 92.

¹⁶ Vittore Branca, ed., *Ricordi di Giovanni di Pagolo Morelli* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1956), 456–57.

¹⁷ See Eva Parra Membrives' contribution to this volume, which also discusses evidence of parents' grief in the early medieval period.

¹⁸ Alberti, *I libri*, 57–59.

istruzioni" or memories and instruction rather than money.¹⁹ In a passage from a later work, *De Iciarchia*, Alberti creates a visual description of older men dining with youth and he warns elders that the next generation will listen to them only if they earn their trust and confidence. It is the duty of the elders to tell stories about subjects that will interest the young such as stories about animals and athletic prowess and also to avoid too much severity for a more loving demeanor: *ma soprattutto darano più opera e' vecchi in essere conosciuti amorevoli, pieni di fede e di bontà, che di parere molto pesati e circospetti*²⁰ [it is the responsibility of the elders to be known as loving, full of faith and goodness rather than very heavy and circumspect.] It is clearly the responsibility of the patriarchs not only to find pleasurable ways of teaching the young, but also to create bonds of affection with them.²¹ This notion is powerfully represented by Domenico Ghirlandaio in his portrait of a grandfather and grandson (1480). In this portrait the bond between the elder and the young child is obvious both in the way they embrace and in their steady gaze. The look of devotion and the loving touch of the child suggest the kind of powerful attachment that we often see in early modern depictions of lovers.

Male pedagogues in Renaissance Florence participated in debates about different styles of discipline with the assumption that the emotional bonds that children form with adults would influence their own behavior as citizens. Pedagogues stressed the importance of recreation when they discussed the need to raise children with love, joy, and serenity. Morelli chastises himself for perhaps having contributed to his son's illness by not allowing him time off from his work as a student and in the family business. Alberti specifically recommends that children have time off for playing, praising fathers who allowed their children to regularly participate in games and recreation.²² Even the traditional pedagogue and preacher, Giovanni Domenici, advocates recreation as an important part of raising virtuous children: " . . . prudentemente t'ingegna di farlo correre, saltare, giocare e trastullare, sì che da Dio no si parta . . . " [prudently arrange to have him run, jump, play and amuse himself so that he doesn't separate himself from God . . .].²³

Although he views playtime as an important part of childhood, Domenici also reprimands parents for devoting too much money and time on their children's recreation. He first chides them for buying too many toys such as wooden horses, beautiful cymbals and golden drums. He then continues by listing the games

¹⁹ Alberti, *De iciarchia*, in *Opere volgari di Leon Battista Alberti*, ed. Cecil Grayson (Bari: Laterza, 1966) II, 210.

²⁰ Alberti, *De iciarchia*, 276.

²¹ See Albrecht Classen's Introduction to this volume in which he critiques Philippe Aries' s notion that medieval and early modern parents did not form strong emotional bonds with their parents.

²² Alberti, *I libri*, 87.

²³ Domenici, *Regola*, 145.

parents play with their children that he believes encourage the little ones to enjoy the world just a little too much: "Or ben guadagni e lavori, tutt 'l dì tenergli in collo, baciargli, e con la lingua leccare, cantar lor canzone, narrare bugiarde favole, . . . con essi fare a capo nascondere, e tutta sollecitudine porre in fargli belli, grassi, lieti, ridenti e secondo la sensualità in tutto contenti?" [How do you earn and work well all day keeping them around your neck, kissing them and licking them with your tongue, singing them songs, telling them false tales, . . . playing peek-a-boo with them and taking care to make them beautiful, fat, happy, smiling and . . . in all sensual ways contented?].²⁴ His long and detailed harangue encourages us to believe that many Florentine parents bought toys for their children and openly played with them, despite Fra Domenici's displeasure. In fact, his text depicts a community in which adults dedicate a good amount of time and resources to their children's happiness and play. Despite Domenici's concern about spoiling children with toys and affection, he clearly believed that recreation played an essential part of any child's education.

Like Domenici, Alberti also promotes the use of pleasurable forms of recreation within measure. He emphasizes a sense of balance and proportion in his art of parenting. A father should not force his child to work or study constantly, the error for which Morelli chastises himself, but rather use recreation to serve as an important balance in the art of pedagogy. In a passage about the importance of literacy Lionardo says that he doesn't want fathers to keep their sons continually imprisoned among books: "incarcerati al continuo tra' libri," but rather that the young should regularly enjoy "sollazzi" or diversions for recreation.²⁵ In the third book, Giannozzo reiterates the necessity of exercise by stating that "lo essercizio piacevole" was the best remedy for staying healthy.²⁶ In several passages in his treatise on architecture Alberti stresses the importance of exercise for youth by recommending that both private and public space be created just for that purpose. In book 5 of his treatise Alberti recommends that "just in front of the vestibule nothing can be more noble than a handsome portico, where the youth . . . may employ themselves in all manner of exercise."²⁷ In books 4 and 8, he makes the same suggestions for public spaces recommending that piazzas be dedicated as open space for young people's exercise and he even refers to the authority of Plato when he states that "in all piazzas there should be spaces left for nurses with their children to meet."²⁸ The square would also serve as a refuge for the elders as well

²⁴ Domenici, *Regola*, 151.

²⁵ Alberti, *I libri*, 87.

²⁶ Alberti, *I libri*, 213.

²⁷ Leon Battista Alberti, *Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. James Leoni. Tiranti Library, 5 (London: A. Tiranti, 1955), 85.

²⁸ Alberti, *Ten Books*, 173.

as children: "a handsome portico, under which the old men may spend the heat of the day or be mutually serviceable to one another. Besides that, the presence of the fathers may deter and restrain the youth . . . from the mischief and folly natural to their age."²⁹ Alberti depicts an ideal communal space dedicated to children of all ages, even nursing newborns, but he also reiterates the notion that this space provides yet another opportunity for fathers to interact with the young.

Alberti's treatise on architecture is a work from his later life and so is the treatise, *De Iciarchia*. In fact his treatise on the *iciarca* or the ideal prince is the only treatise on morality from this period. In this work he extends the early arguments of *I libri della famiglia* describing the ideal prince as a father who establishes his authority "amando e beneficando."³⁰ This link reinforces the connections between *oikos* and *polis* that Alberti had inherited from Greek thought and already affirmed in *I libri della famiglia*, and also helps him to compare parenting or the construction of a family to yet another trade—architecture. In the first book of his treatise on architecture, Alberti states that the household is like a little city and that "if a City, according to the Opinion of Philosophers, be no more than a great House, and, on the other Hand, a House be a little City; why may it not be said, that the Members of that House are so many little Houses."³¹ Just as an architect has the responsibility to help create buildings that will aid the commune, a father has a responsibility to help raise citizens who will also benefit the public good.

In Florentine writings about the family, citizenship carries two meanings. Following the classical tradition, authors referred to citizens as the elite group of men who had the social and economic capital to be included in the list of families whose members can run for communal offices. At the same time, however, these same writers described citizenship as the participation in social networks that had less to do with an ideal form of masculinity and more to do with the everyday cooperation necessary to make a collective work. Thus, authors such as Alberti stressed that sons, who would one day be citizens, must learn how to communicate with and earn the admiration of family members, neighbors, and even servants. In order to teach their sons how to function well in these networks, Florentine pedagogues wrote about issues that were usually reserved for women. Emotions play an important part in describing proper discipline for fathers and teachers as well as explanations of proper behavior for children. Alberti, for instance, recommended that fathers discipline children with love rather than fear: "Vero è che io sempre con ogni industria e arte mi sono molto ingegnato d'essere

²⁹ Alberti, *Ten Books*, 173.

³⁰ Alberti, *De Iciarchia* 193. I am indebted to the analysis of Elisa Frauenfelder on the connection between Alberti's two works. See her *Il pensiero pedagogico di Leon Battista Alberti* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1995), 80.

³¹ Alberti, *Ten Books*, 13.

da tutti amato più che temuto, nè mai a me piacque apresso di chi mi riputasse padre volere ivi parere signore.” [It is true that I always worked with every effort and art to be loved rather than feared by all, never did I like to seem a lord close to those who considered me a father.]³² In this quotation Alberti has one of his characters clarify the link between fatherhood and citizenship; fathers must model for sons how to win respect through love so that one day their sons will be able also to gain power through social connection rather than through violence.³³

The emotional intensity with which many male writers describe their relationship to their children is striking. Tears are not uncommon in these texts as men not only express the importance of forging a bond with their children, but also the great joy and satisfaction they themselves gain from the experience.³⁴ In Alberti's treatise Leonardo says that he could hardly hold back tears listening to other men in his family discussing the “pleasure” and “sweetness” of raising children.³⁵ Morelli tells his readers about the tears he shed when his son died, not only because of his loss, but also because of the remorse he felt for having clung to a more traditional, rigid relationship with his son:

tu gli volevi bene e mai di tuo bene nol facesti contento; tu nollo trattavi come figliuolo ma come istrano; tu non gli mostrasti mai un buon viso; tu nollo baciasti mai una volta che buon gli paress; tu l'amacerasti alla bottega e colle molte ispesse e aspre battiture.³⁶

[you loved him and yet you never made him happy with your love; you didn't treat him like a son but a stranger; you did not show him your happiness; you never kissed him even once when he was good; you consumed him at the shop and with too many transactions and harsh beatings.]

Another contemporary of Alberti, Giannozzo Manetti, wrote an entire treatise on paternal consolation approving the practice of expressing intense grief over the loss of a child.³⁷ It is also interesting to note that Manetti was one of several

³² Alberti, *I libri*, 19. Trans. Watkins, *The Family*, 26.

³³ See Alison P. Coudert's article in this volume in which she describes the harsher forms of discipline recommended later in Protestant Europe. The evidence in our articles strongly suggests that disciplinary methods in Europe did not continually evolve into more modern, enlightened practices but rather that there are competing notions of how children should be taught throughout the late medieval and early modern period.

³⁴ See Albrecht Classen's Introduction to this volume for a summary of recent literature on the history of emotions in the medieval and early modern periods.

³⁵ Alberti, *I libri*, 34.

³⁶ Morelli, *Ricordi*, 501.

³⁷ For a detailed analysis of Manetti's dialogue, which also shows expresses conflicting ideas about men and emotion in early modern Florence, see James R. Banker, “Mourning a Son: Childhood and Paternal Love in the *Consolatoria* of Gianozzo Manetti,” *History of Childhood* 3 (1976): 351–62. For the role of children in funeral sermons, see Albrecht Classen, “Die Darstellung von Frauen in Leichenpredigten der Frühen Neuzeit. Lebensverhältnisse, Bildungsstand, Religiosität, Arbeitsbereiche,” *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 108 (2000): 291–318;

workers involved in the construction of the Florentine children's hospital, the Ospedale degli Innocenti, who either wrote treatises on the family or were fictional participants in dialogues on the subject.³⁸ This suggests very strongly that the philosophical connection between family and city inherited from the Greeks was not just a matter of an abstract ideal for Alberti and his contemporaries but also part of everyday practices that influenced public space and even professional activities.

In Alberti's dialogue, fathers encourage younger relatives to look forward to parenting and accept joyfully the responsibility it requires: "... per tutti se ne dice ch' e' putti sono conforto e giuoco a' padri e a' suoi vechi. Nè credo si truovi si obligato di faccende, nè si carico di pensieri padre alcuno a chi non sia la presenza de' fanciulli suoi molto sollazzosa." [for everyone says that children are a comfort and pleasure to fathers and to the elders. I don't believe one finds a father so burdened with obligations or heavy with worries to whom the presence of his children is not a great joy].³⁹ If fathers want to raise sons who make enjoyable company for others, they must be the ones to model the pleasures of social connection. Alberti fashions fatherhood as a rational craft based on observation of both the individual child and the composition of the social body, yet he also stresses that emotion is equally important for the process of raising citizens. Fathers need to experience parenting not only as a responsibility or a burden but also as a joy.⁴⁰

Philippe Ariès asserted that, starting in the fifteenth century, childhood began to change in the West, particularly for the mercantile class. He believed that the change occurred because children stayed within their nuclear families for longer periods of time, forging a closer bond between parents and their offspring.⁴¹ In addition, the literacy and mathematics skills that children needed to acquire demanded more leisure time. Children required a certain amount of time away from physical labor and activity in order to become literate. I agree with the notion that childhood in the mercantile urban centers of fifteenth-century Europe was shaped at least in part by the needs of the mercantile and administrative classes to create literate citizens. Pedagogues such as Alberti clearly saw a connection between the importance of leisure, tranquility, and recreation in childhood and the

see also the volume *Grief and Gender: 700–1700*, ed. Jennifer C. Vaught with Lynne Dickson Bruckner (New York: Palgrave, 2003).

³⁸ Philip Gavitt, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence: The Ospedale degli Innocenti 1410–1536* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1990), 150.

³⁹ Alberti, *I libri*, 40. Trans. Watkins, *The Family*, 50.

⁴⁰ See Mary Dzon's article in this volume, which analyzes the role of the father in medieval legends about Joseph and Jesus.

⁴¹ Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (1960; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 369–71.

building of mature, competent adults. Yet, I do not think that this represented a revolutionary change in the relationship between parents and children.⁴² Alberti makes clear in his dialogue that he is aware of different notions of pedagogy and chooses a model of affection and positive enforcement that had already been detailed by classical thinkers such as Quintillian.⁴³ What Alberti's work shows is that in fifteenth-century Florence there was a debate about how to raise children and the most prevalent ideal was of a benevolent parent who tries to encourage children with praise rather than punish them with physical abuse. The relationship between adults and children that Alberti supports was not revolutionary but it was strongly endorsed by many male writers in fifteenth-century Florence. What I find particularly interesting about fifteenth-century pedagogical writings in Florence is the intense focus on the importance of men in the raising of children and on the importance of emotional bonds between parents and their offspring. For Alberti and many of his contemporaries, the father does not just pass on his blood and social status to a child but instead must take an active role in helping that child become a citizen.

Although I believe that parents had strong bonds of affection with their children before the fifteenth century, I also agree with Ariès that the rise of the monetary economy and mercantile urban centers influenced how parents thought of childhood and interacted with children. Money allowed more fluid identities in class and to a lesser degree in gender. One of the ways that men had defended their social and legal superiority was their physical strength. The *Oeconomicus* is a good example of the use of that defense of patriarchy in classical thought. In fifteenth-century Florence, however, men often did not achieve status by farming or by defending their city with arms but with reading, writing, and accounting skills. The *otium* required to obtain those skills not only gave children more recreation and freedom but also forced men to refigure ideal masculinity so that it included characteristics such as leisure and emotion that had been associated with women. Alberti and other male pedagogues refigured masculinity to include the characteristics that would bring success to themselves and their household. The skills of nurturing and bonding with others served as an important part of what it meant to be a citizen in fifteenth-century Florence.

The encouragement that many male pedagogues gave to younger men to take on the responsibility of raising children and enjoy it also suggests that although benevolent and diligent parenting was the ideal, it needed to be constantly

⁴² For a more thorough critique of this evolutionary model of childhood in western culture, see Albrecht Classen's Introduction to this volume.

⁴³ Another writer of the fifteenth century, Matteo Palmieri, also is aware of the classical debate and makes similar pedagogical recommendations, see his *Vita civile*, ed. Gino Bellini (Florence: Sansoni, 1982), 35.

reinforced. In a similar fashion, many family treatises contain long harangues against the use of wet nurses, and encourage mothers to breast-feed their own children. Once again, the ideal is to create a strong, intimate bond between parents and children.⁴⁴ I believe that authors reiterated this ideal because fifteenth-century Florence was a relatively wealthy community. Much like middle-class people in western cultures today, wealthy merchants could afford to pay others to raise and educate their children for them. Pedagogues like Alberti, however, saw this as a danger for both the family and the larger culture. The rise of the monetary economy reinforced the notion that children should be raised in a tranquil environment in which they could gain the skills to be successful. Paradoxically the same new social groups that promoted that notion of childhood also enjoyed the privilege of having enough money to be able to hire or buy slaves to perform the often burdensome tasks of raising children. Alberti focused on the joy of paternity in part because he realized that many parents had choices about how to spend their time. His parental preaching strongly suggests that active, benevolent fathers were the cultural ideal of fifteenth-century Florence, but it also suggests that vestiges of other models persisted and that some parents continued to see parenting as just a burden and not a pleasure.

⁴⁴ For a detailed study of these treatises and their advice see Rudolph M. Bell, *How to Do It: Guides to Good Living for Renaissance Italians* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 124–45. Bell believes that previous scholars have exaggerated how much wet nursing was used by Florentines: “I would suggest . . . that the reason advice manuals do not give advice on visiting infants put out to nurse is that very few infants were put out to nurse, at least not by the middle-class people who bought these books.” (136)

Laurel Reed

(University of California, San Diego)

Art, Life, Charm and Titian's *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi*

Philippe Ariès's seminal 1962 study, *Centuries of Childhood: a Social History of Family Life* (orig. 1960), makes no mention of Titian Vecellio's *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi*. It is a puzzling omission because Ariès refers to Titian often and even accuses the artist of using *putti* excessively in his paintings.¹ Given Ariès' apparent familiarity with Titian's oeuvre, it is surprising that Ariès neglects the Strozzi portrait because it is one of few high quality portraits of a child from the sixteenth century. Artistic representations of children from the medieval and early modern periods provide much of the support for Ariès's study and he constructs an argument about the developing awareness of childhood based on an apparent emerging popularity of portraits of children. Yet despite Ariès's reliance on art, art historians have been slow to engage with Ariès in the debate over the existence of childhood, and have not supported or challenged Ariès's thesis. In fact, although Ariès's thesis has undergone much scrutiny and continues to be the center of heated debate, his use of visual materials has gone largely unchallenged by art historians.² Adrian Wilson criticizes Ariès's methodology and rejects his conclusions, drawn from iconography, but does not offer plausible alternatives.³ What follows is an examination of Titian's 1542 *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi* and a commentary on Ariès's problematic methodological approach to visual sources.

The discipline of art history opposes the assumption of a direct correspondence between art and life, at least in reference to the pre-contemporary period. Instead, art is understood to possess its own logic; the portrayed or represented is not a

¹ Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1962), 44, for example, in his discussion of the rise of the *putto* as an artistic motif: "Titian in particular used of rather abused it: witness the *Triumph of Venus* in the Prado."

² For an extensive discussion of the debate around Ariès's thesis, see Albrecht Classen's Introduction "Philippe Ariès and the Consequences: History of Childhood, Family Relations, and Personal Emotions: Where do we stand today?"

³ Adrian Wilson, "The Infancy of Childhood: An Appraisal of Philippe Ariès," *History and Theory* 19, 2 (1980): 253–74.

mirror of what actually is, but rather an interpretation of an event, person, or existence governed by external factors.⁴ Art is, more accurately, reality filtered through the varied lens of aestheticism, the lens shifting according to period, location, taste and a myriad of other factors.

Ariès's study does not make this distinction. In the opening of his second chapter Ariès points to a twelfth-century Ottonian miniature to suggest that there "was no place for childhood in the medieval world" because there are eight diminutively sized men with full musculature surrounding Christ instead of pudgy children in a depiction of the Gospel account of Christ calling the little children to his side.⁵ Ariès assumes a direct link between art and life; what is seen in art apes the social situation and attitudes of the time. He does not entertain alternative explanations for the depiction or arrangement, ignoring contemporary theological concerns or reasons pertaining to the iconographic ensemble of the miniature or miniature series. For Ariès, the shift in artistic taste and practice is equated with a shift in social conceptions and the invention of the contemporary idea of childhood. When isolated as a line of argument in this fashion, the dangers of this approach are immediately apparent. One would be pressed to argue for a direct correspondence between the development of knowledge of the human form that blossomed during the Renaissance and then the loss of that skill at the close of the sixteenth century during the decades of Mannerism as a shift in the conception of the human body and prejudice against short-limbed people.

Representations of children, like all else in art, are conditioned by artistic convention and contemporary expectations of style and function. This paper examines the *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi* and the ways in which Titian adapts portrait conventions and themes to express something about the child's process of development.⁶ This is not to say that the information yielded by this portrait substantiates universal claims about the nature of children during the sixteenth century, but it is an accurate gauge of what Titian and the Strozzi family wished to commemorate about the young daughter. The portrait was commissioned by the Strozzi, but Titian was solely responsible for the pictorial description of Clarissa, including the indication of her interiority or state of mind. The fact that

⁴ Francis Haskell's 1993 text *History and its Images* deals with the ways that art and art history have been used by historians to understand the past. Francis Haskell, *History and Its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

⁵ Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* 33.

⁶ Titian's *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi* was also treated by Luba Freedman in a 1989 article. Freedman focuses on Titian's unique approach to the portrayal of a two-year-old child and makes significant inroads into our understanding of the portrait. This paper considers that portrait in a different context, not necessarily as a portrait of a child *as a child* but instead as a portrait made in a specific social and geographical context. Freedman's article and hypotheses about the paper will be discussed specifically later in this paper. Luba Freedman, "Titian's Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi: The State Portrait of a Child," *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 31 (1989): 165–80.

this portrait shows the child as having an interior presence or index of personhood sets it apart from other representations of children of the period. It is only through the examination of how Titian painted the child and how the child is characterized in the portrait that we can begin to reach for conclusions about the sixteenth-century understanding of childhood or family relations on the basis of visual representation.

Rather than considering the *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi* as proof of social attitudes, an examination of the portrait as a portrait reveals a complex work painted and conceived by an accomplished portraitist. Clarissa should be considered as one of Titian's more challenging subjects because the reason for her commemoration was not a familiar one in the sixteenth-century. A large-scale, full-length portrait by a prominent artist was expensive and required extensive planning. The full-length portrait format in and of itself was rare and reserved almost exclusively for images of kings and nobles. Whatever the reason, portraits of children from the sixteenth-century are relatively uncommon, and there is no indication that a desire existed to commemorate the stages of life associated with childhood on an individual scale: the baby book type photo albums chronicling the first years of life are a recent development. Thus, a portrait of a two-year-old child presents a unique challenge for the artist and contemporary scholar alike. The occasion for commission and intent of commemoration of the *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi* cannot be pulled from the traditional stock of options because there are no direct parallels.

The innovative aspect of this portrait lies in the way in which Titian uses widely known artistic conventions and social attitudes to characterize his sitter. Titian shows Clarissa in the process of becoming an adult and visually communicates her continuing acquisition of grace and charm. The *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi* does not and can not offer conclusive evidence about the presence of the social construction of childhood in the sixteenth-century. It can, however, shed light on what Titian and the Strozzi family deemed an appropriate occasion in the orbit of two-year-old experience for formal commemoration.⁷ Only through the reconstruction of the motivation for or commemorative occasion of the portrait on the basis of visual analysis and period conventions is it possible to glean information about societal attitudes toward children presented in the work of art. It is misleading to draw conclusions about social phenomena directly from a painting.

An examination of portraits of children from roughly the same period introduces two standard portrait functions: to commemorate the child's future public role or to strengthen the public view of the family by celebrating dynastic continuity. Hans Holbein the Younger's *Portrait of Edward IV* from 1538 is an

⁷ The occasion for the commission of this portrait is largely unknown. In 1542 the Strozzi family were living in Venice as Florentine political exiles from the Medici government. There were seven daughters in the Strozzi family and Clarissa is the only one to have been portrayed in this way, at this age or in 1542.

example of a portrait concerned with future public role. Holbein presented the portrait to Edward's father, Henry VIII, fifteen months after Edward's birth. The inscription, addressed to Edward, advises the infant prince to rule in the same manner as his father.⁸ The sentiment of the inscription continues through the format, costume and posture of the prince's portrait. Portraits of Henry VIII, by Holbein and other artists in the style of Holbein, attest to this purpose as the child is fashioned in the same manner as his father.⁹ Edward wears a red and gold miniature version of a Northern costume with a feather beret. Although the costume maintains the same form and style as adult costumes there are modifications suited to the age of the wearer. The beret provides a pointed example of these modifications. In the Henry VIII portrait, the beret is a contained sphere resting on the crown of the head whereas Edward's beret is attached to a type of skull cap and fastened under the chin. Although the basic elements of the costume, the sleeves, cape, and ruffled lace undershirt are identical, there are evident modifications that indicate an awareness of childlike characteristics.

This is a portrait of a child-king and the artist still must establish precocity, extraordinary intelligence, and dexterity. Accordingly, Edward holds a golden rattle in a manner that recalls the way a ruler would hold a scepter or a nobleman a sword. The control with which the child holds his right hand in a blessing gesture and his facial composure further this aim.

Upon further examination it becomes apparent that Holbein approximates the appearance of the child based on the physiognomy of the father. The preliminary drawing for the head at Windsor does not suggest that it was done in the presence of the young prince. The correspondence between the physiognomies of Edward IV and Henry VIII suggest instead that Holbein created the image of the prince based on known portraits of the king making adjustments to accommodate childlike features.

Holbein's multiple portraits of Henry VIII follow a stock typology and expectations of physiognomy. Portraits of the ruler not done by Holbein invariably follow the same formula and show a full-faced, bearded figure with heavy jowls. The close shape of the beard lends definition to the otherwise fleshy jaw line and in most portraits the beard sports a triangular indentation at the bottom of his chin. According to portrait conventions, Henry's lips are no wider than the edge of his nostrils. Holbein indicates the bridge of the nose with darker patches at the

⁸ Lorne Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits: European Portrait-Painting in the 14th, 15th, and 16th Centuries* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 104

⁹ There are numerous portraits of Henry VIII attributed to Holbein and his followers. The portrait of Henry VIII from 1540 is particularly similar in physiognomic characteristics to the Edward IV portrait. The attribution of the 1540 portrait to Holbein is disputed by scholars, but regardless the portrait is done in the style of Holbein's other portraits of the ruler.

edges of Henry's eyes and extending arch of the eyebrows. In all portraits, the ruler has a truncated *filtrum*.¹⁰

In making the portrait of Edward VI, Holbein arguably used one of his portraits of Henry VIII as a point of departure from which he calculated the child's physiognomy. Albrecht Dürer published diagrams on the relative proportions of children and adults in his 1532 *De symmetria humanorum corporum*; Holbein's portrait faithfully follows Dürer's recommendations for proportional physiognomic shifts. Holbein fills out and accentuates the central portion of the child's cheeks so that the jowls of the father are turned into the chubby baby cheeks of the prince. The child's head is much larger than the body and the forehead dominates the most space with the eyes, nose, and mouth occupying only a small triangular portion of the lower face. His fingers are short and plump and flesh bubbles out between each knuckle joint. Most convincing to the father-son portrait shift is Edward's angular jaw line and *filtrum* shape. As was mentioned previously, in the Henry portraits, the cropped beard delineates the jaw line and accentuates the chin. In order to account for the child's obvious lack of facial hair, the artist must invent this familiar trait and reconcile the jaw line with the required chubby cheeks. The result is awkward, particularly on the left half of the face, and the chin juts at an odd angle (perhaps due to chin confusion created by the pyramid indentation of Henry's beard). The length of Edward's *filtrum* again indicates Holbein's reliance on Dürer's system of proportions because it is longer and more pronounced than his father's in accordance with Dürer's stipulations.

The correspondence between the Edward portrait and the portraits of his father obviously suggests the legitimacy and stability of the royal family. However, the Edward portrait does not explicitly concentrate on this aim because the inscription, composed by Richard Morison, addresses Edward instead of loyal subjects and is written in Latin. A portrait intended to assure the English subjects of dynastic continuity would address that public instead of the child and would possibly have an inscription in the vernacular. The character of the inscription is personal and we can assume that this was a more private reminder of the prince's virtuous future public role and persona. The correspondence between the *Portrait of Henry VIII* and *Portrait of Edward VI* aims at celebrating family likeness in physiognomy and beneficent character but other portraits more explicitly proclaim and assure the public of dynastic continuity. The royal family may have been heeding a derivative of the advice given by Leon Battista Alberti in *Della famiglia* for parents to surround their children with portraits of virtuous people in the nursery so that the children would be surrounded by goodness and morality from the cradle.¹¹

¹⁰ The word *filtrum* (not listed in the OED) comes from medical terminology and indicates the central notch or indentation between the upper lip and nose.

¹¹ Leon Battista Alberti, *Della Famiglia*, trans. Guido A. Guarino (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1971), 48; see also Juliann Vitullo's study on Alberti in this volume.

Jan Gossaert's portrait of *The Children of Christian II of Denmark* provides a more fitting example of the portrait employed in the service of public reassurance. Scholars believe that it was painted shortly after the queen's death in January of 1526 because the children are dressed in mourning.¹² The three red-headed children are seated behind a table with their hands resting on the top of the surface. The son sits in the middle and wears a black doublet with white shirt and a large, flat black hat. The girls are dressed in matching black and white gowns with fur lining. Dorothea (on the left) wears a pearl necklace and Christina wears a white kerchief with black cap overlay. There is a strong family resemblance demonstrated in their deep-set brown eyes, small bow-shaped pouted lips, and pinched filtrums. Interestingly, the young sitters all have slight under-eye circles, a feature normally associated with adults. None of the children show any visible signs of emotion or indications of interiority, and they look at different points outside of the picture plane.

The date of this portrait and the discrepancy in the apparent ages of the two girls requires further explanation. If the portrait was painted in 1526, then, according to the royal records, the oldest son Johannes would have been eight, Dorothea would have been five and Christina, four. However, in the portrait it appears that Dorothea (in the middle) is markedly older, far more than the time monthly that separated their births. The argument can be made that the purpose of the portrait was less to capture the appearance of the royal children than to create a reassuring image of a royal family. Johannes and Dorothea are portrayed as the king and Queen and Christina represents their daughter, thereby completing the family image.

The portrait functions as propagandistic image assuring the public that the Danish royal family is well, even after the death of the queen. In this case, the characterization of the two older children as adults is more deliberate than in other portraits. The likenesses of the children are manipulated in order to separate the ages between the two girls, making one the queen and one a child. Yet even Christina, who is supposed to be the child of the group, wears a fashionable adult gown and sits in a composed fashion at the table with her siblings, ably holding a quince. The proposed purpose of the portrait leaves no room for childish capriciousness, but this does not signify that the behavior was wholly unknown in sixteenth-century Denmark.

¹² Jan-Baptist Bedaux and Rudi Ekkart, eds., *Pride and Joy: Children's Portraits in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam: Ludion Press, 2000).



Titian (Tiziano Vcelli) (c. 1488-1576). *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi at the Age of Two*. 1542. Oil on canvas, 115 x 98 cm. Inv. 160A. Photo: Joerg P. Anders.

Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany
Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz / Art Resource, NY

Even though neither of these portraits conveys a sense of childhood identical to the one that is so familiar in the contemporary world, they have a distinct purpose that runs contrary to characterizing children as helpless or unpredictable. In order to assure the public or celebrate a son's future rule, the child or children must be shown as capable, sensible, and precocious. We hardly expect contemporary parents to keep a portrait of their child taken when the child is being a holy terror with jam and dirt everywhere! Portraits are still made with the intention of remembering or celebrating something in particular, and while jam and dirt are not appropriately celebratory for a formal portrait, they are undoubtedly part of child life. Just as we would not claim that jam and dirt are absent from quotidian childhood, likewise we should not claim that because the Gossaert or Holbein portraits do not show children as prized for their individual personalities that parents did not love their children or did not conceive of them as different from adults. Portraits are commissioned and the content and characterization of the sitter is shaped by the needs and desires of the commissioning party and the vision of the commissioned artist. Ariès does not consider this exchange relationship between commissioner or patron, the artist and the sitter. Ariès takes the anachronistic view that portraits in the sixteenth century are akin to the occasional and spontaneous snapshot, a record of a given moment and situation. A portrait is necessarily a manipulated and manufactured view of someone that is fashioned according to the desires and requirements of multiple parties. Gossaert manipulated the ages and relationships of the children in order to create a reassuring royal family image. Holbein manufactured his sitter's appearance to correspond to his needs, resources and the demands of the commission. Renaissance portraits are not whimsical or unprompted and they are certainly not a faithful record of life experience or reality.

The intent or occasion for the commissioning of a portrait is decidedly easier to determine in the case of royal children or children from noble, ruling families than in the case of children from lower class families. In the case of Titian's *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi*, we face a dearth of information about the sitter and initially about the commissioning occasion. The *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi* is disarming because of its dissimilarity to other contemporary children's portraits. Using the cursory examination technique employed by Ariès, one could look at this portrait and conclude that by 1542, childhood was a well developed phenomenon and that children were celebrated and cherished. Two year-old, ringlet coiffed Clarissa stands in dark parade hall wearing a white party dress and embracing a small dog. Her pose appears spontaneous and her round cheeks, pudgy limbs and tousled hair all indicate a well-developed awareness of the morphologies of childhood. It is as if Titian captured Clarissa momentarily interrupted in the feeding of her puppy. This portrait has no clear public function and it seems plausible that it was commissioned by Clarissa's father, the Florentine patrician Roberto Strozzi, to

celebrate and remember his daughter's appearance at age two. The suggestion is intriguing and should not be dismissed entirely, but requires a solid rounding in sixteenth century principles, practices and conventions in order to verify or disprove. It is dangerous to apply contemporary expectations to artifacts created in another time and place.¹³

Titian's *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi* was the subject of a 1989 article in the *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* by Luba Freedman. Freedman focuses on Titian's unique approach to the portrayal of a two-year old child and makes significant inroads into our understanding of the portrait. She argues that the portrait is a state portrait of the *child as a child* in the contemporary definition and understanding of the word and therefore one of the earliest indications of the developing social construction. This paper further problematizes the portrait, probing the sophisticated methods of sitter characterization and the significance of portraying a *child as a child* for the sixteenth-century artist, viewer and patron.

To fully appreciate the *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi*, it is important to consider it as a portrait using the lines of inquiry associated with the genre of portraiture. Much of portrait scholarship is overly concerned with the identity of the sitter. In this case, the identity was determined by Georg Gronau in 1906, but the name does not yield much additional information.¹⁴ Roberto Strozzi was a prominent Florentine patrician and the family was in Venice in 1542 as political exiles from Medicean Florence. The Strozzi family had seven daughters and Clarissa is the only one known to have had her portrait painted at this time or in this format. According to Harry Berger Jr., the portrait is better understood when the scholar focuses on *how* the portrait is made rather than *who* that sitter was.¹⁵ Clarissa leaves little choice but to follow this directive.

Clarissa is shown full-length, which is relatively uncommon, in particular for non-noble or non-royal sitters. Vasari claims in Titian's *vita*, although incorrectly, that the Venetian artist introduced full length portraits to Italy¹⁶ but there are examples that predate Titian.¹⁷ It is possible that the artist was known for this format and it was requested by the Strozzi family for the portrait of Clarissa. Lorne Campbell suggests that full-length portraits allow for both the artist and the patron to exercise full inventive faculties, because there is no need to decide where to

¹³ For an extended explanation of this problem, see Adrian Wilson and T.G. Ashplant, "Present-Centred History and the Problem of Historical," *The Historical Journal* 31, 2 (1988): 253–74.

¹⁴ G. Gronau, "Zwei Tizianische Bildnisse der Berlin Galerie," *Jahrbuch der Königlich Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 27 (1906): 7–12..

¹⁵ Harry Berger, *Fictions of the Pose: Rembrandt against the Italian Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

¹⁶ Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite dei più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architetti*, ed. Licia Ragghianti and Carlo Ragghianti (Milan: Rizzole Editore, 1973), 342: "comincio Tiziano quello che è poi venuto in use, cioè fare alcuni ritratti interi."

¹⁷ Lorne Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits: European Portrait-Painting in the 14th, 15th, and 16th Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 55

truncate the sitter and the lower extremities can play a role in the characterization of the sitter.¹⁸

Clarissa stands in the middle of the picture plane, slightly offset to the viewer's left. She leans on a pedestal effaced with a marble relief with her arm encircling the puppy. The window behind the pedestal offers a view of a hilled and forested countryside. Including a window with an exterior landscape was a popular feature of many portraits in the sixteenth century. Titian often employed this type of landscape view, although there are no other examples of the corner window landscapes with a full-length sitter. Titian's 1536 portrait of *Eleonora Gonzaga, Duchess of Urbino*, includes a window on the left side of the canvas in back of the three-quarter length seated sitter. In the Gonzaga portrait the window space is narrow but significant because the topography matches that of the Urbino region, a direct reference and proprietary gesture to the holdings of the duchy.

In the *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi*, the window molding sits only slightly above the plane of the top of the pedestal and unifies the right half of the composition. A velvet purple cloth drapes over the right side of the pedestal, acting as a mediator between the furniture and the edge of the picture plane. The window does not serve as the main light source as Clarissa and her puppy are frontally illuminated. The pool of light that surrounds Clarissa in the otherwise dark parade hall does not extend to the left edge of the canvas. The relief on the front of the pedestal reveals two dancing *putti*, the two figures clasp hands, facing one another while springing in stone step.

The brown and white, spaniel-breed dog perches on its hind haunches. The two front legs are stiff and thin. The angle of view indicates that it is only the dog's head that turns to face the viewer, its body faces Clarissa. The sharp curve of the dog's spine also points to its original positioning although the curvature appears exaggerated, in particular near the tail. The dog may be the first suggestion of the intriguing subtext of the portrait.

Similar to the window landscape, dogs were a frequent inclusion Titian's portraits. The *Portrait of Eleonora Gonzaga* accommodates a similar spaniel, although relegated to a minor rather than supporting role. The Gonzaga spaniel relaxes in a croissant curl with its head resting on the paws. Although the edge of the canvas cuts off the dog's back end, even in partial view, the ease and naturalism of the dog's form is evident. Another Titian portrait of a member of the Gonzaga family, the *Portrait of Federico Gonzaga* includes a different breed of dog who is the complete opposite of Clarissa's stiff companion. This dog gazes adoringly at his master and lifts one paw up toward Federico's waist; the dog's spontaneous gesture of submission and camaraderie providing an appropriate counterpart to highlight his master's composure.

¹⁸ Ibid., 69

These two other Titian portraits prove that the artist was indeed capable of painting a natural canine; this is not a question of ability or familiarity with the ways of the animal kingdom. The stiffness of Clarissa's dog alerts the viewer to other components and methods of presentation that comprise the subtext of the portrait. It is this subtext that can be useful for the cultural historian and art historian alike; it reveals the subtleties of the commission and offers insight into the cultural situation in which the portrait was created. Following the signal of the unnatural curvature of the dog's spine, interest shifts to the curvature of Clarissa's hips, backs ide and waist chain. Under closer inspection, our contemporary mindset assumption of Clarissa's spontaneous posturing collapses. In the same fashion as her pet, Clarissa poses awkwardly, caught in an unnatural triple motion. Titian skillfully constructs Clarissa's spontaneity but is careful to leave evidence of the artificial construction, testament to his skill as a painter and to the ultimate intent of the portrait.

The rendering of her skirt shows Clarissa's right foot as angled toward the pedestal. This is supported by the angle of view of her backside and the foreshortened view of her waist. She twists the lower half of her body toward the pedestal, as indicated by the curvature of the gold chain which is higher on her right hip than it is on her left. If we assume that she was facing the puppy to share the pretzel, then her right foot remains in its original position, parallel with the line of the front of the pedestal. Clarissa's left foot points to the right of the picture plane and steps in front of the pedestal; the protruding pleat of the dress implies the leftward motion of her leg. The left foot and leg contradict the coil of her right leg, hips and derriere. This confusion and contradiction of motion continues in the rendering of her upper body. Clarissa cradles the puppy in her left arm and the dog's head hides her left shoulder from view. The right arm is displayed frontally, leading to the conclusion that her upper body twists toward the left side of the canvas, or toward the dark hall. Her head twists left as well with her eyes directed furthest left, indicating the direction of continued motion of the head. The tradition of Renaissance reaction portraits, exemplified in Leonardo's *Portrait of Cecilia Gallerani*, held that the eyes responded first, then the head and neck, followed by the rest of the body down to the toes. Only Clarissa's upper body follows the leftward motion of her eyes, her lower body shifts doubly toward the pedestal and forward in front of the pedestal. Titian fully capitalizes on the creative possibilities afforded by the full-length format.

Titian presents Clarissa as the deliberate distortion of the *figura serpentinata*. She imitates the graceful and sinuous contrapositioning in an awkward manner. The artist's arrangement of the figure's stance was the major communicant of moral status in the Renaissance. *Contrapposto*, or counterpositioning allowed artists to display virtuosity by the stability and naturalness of the stance or the way in which the body supported the heaviest member, the head. Verbal confirmation of

this practice comes from a statement made by Michelangelo about Donatello's sculpture, *St. Mark* from 1411. According to Giorgio Vasari, Michelangelo said, "If St. Mark is as Donatello has shown him to be, then truly we can believe every word he wrote."¹⁹ St. Mark appears so firmly planted and balanced that the viewer is assured of his supreme morality. By the 1540s, natural *contrapposto* had developed to an extreme and evolved into what is known as the *figura serpentinata*. The *figura serpentinata* curves in an "s" shape, but unlike the earlier Gothic s-curve, claims to take into account the balance of the figure. The *figura serpentinata* dramatizes the upward motion of the body, in the words of art theorist Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, similar to the flame of a candle.

The central figure of Raphael's altarpiece of *St. Cecilia* provides a modest example of a *figura serpentinata* while Parmagianino's *Madonna with the Long Neck* presents a more obvious serpentine form. Leonardo's *Leda* is often cited as the paradigmatic example of the *figura serpentinata* and the woman's pose offers a compelling comparison to Clarissa's.

Although Leonardo's *Leda* is now lost, scholars believe Cesare da Sesto's copy to be the most faithful to the original. When the *Leda* and the *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi* are set against one another, the similarities between the two poses are immediately apparent. Leda's swan is replaced by Clarissa's puppy, but both figures turn their bodies toward the animals and their heads in the opposite direction. Both of their arms reach across their bodies and the hip attached to their engaged leg sits higher than the relaxed one. Although we see much more of Leda by virtue of her nudity, the general disposition of Clarissa's pose corresponds, at least superficially, to Leda's. But while the *Leda* is celebrated as the exemplary *figura serpentinata*, imbued with unparalleled grace, Clarissa appears gawkily positioned.

The cause of this clumsiness is the disjunction between Clarissa's multiple directions of movement. She simultaneously appears to be moving into the pedestal, in front of the pedestal to her left and away from the pedestal to her right. In contrast, the graceful curvature of the *Leda*'s body mediates and unifies her diverse directions of movement. The different angles of Leda's feet do not lead the viewer to assume that she is conflicted but rather their balanced interrelation convinces of her grace and stability. Our assumed positioning of Clarissa's feet with her right foot angled toward the pedestal and her left foot stepping in front of the pedestal, is nominally similar (in reverse) but appears disjointed because it lacks the balanced interrelation of the parts.

The formula for the *figura serpentinata* was calculated and artificial rather than spontaneous and integrated with the notion of artifice. It involves appropriate demonstrations of contraposition, variety and more abstract spiritual considerations. Lomazzo explained that decorum was divided into natural decorum, which

¹⁹ Vasari, *Le vite dei piu eccellenti pittori, scultori e architetti* 151.

relates to the nature of the figure, and artificial decorum, which relates to grace and an innate understanding of what *should* happen.²⁰ The central idea of the *figura serpentinata* is that it is an apparently spontaneous artificiality. Within this formulation, there is the consideration of both the artifice of the subject and the capabilities of the painter.

Just as in the case of the earlier discussed dog, this is not an issue of artistic competence; Titian knew how to paint both a perfect *figura serpentinata* and a natural child. The Virgin Mary from the *Frari Assumption* provides convincing evidence for Titian's *serpentinata* talents and any depiction of the Infant Christ proves Titian's finesse for painting graceful children. Titian's awkward positioning of Clarissa is deliberate and presents an intriguing view of the state of the human child.

The Infant Christ was rarely subjected to this type of inelegance and Titian's works *the Gypsy Madonna* and *Madonna and Child with St. John* prove this. However, what is important to remember is that having been born "fully human and fully divine," Christ exhibited grace from birth. As a mere mortal, Clarissa, has to acquire grace or *sprezzatura*, the quality of "artfully pretending to natural," she must learn "to be" and Titian shows her in this learning or process or imperfectly imitating. The acquisition of *sprezzatura* concerned many Renaissance Italians and was most popularly theorized by Baldassare Castiglione in *the Courtier*. Castiglione understood imitation to be the primary means by which one becomes "naturally artful" or "artfully natural." As Harry Berger's explain in "*Sprezzatura* and the Absence of Grace," "to the extent that the representational techniques associated with *sprezzatura* rely on study, performance, and dissimulation, they subject physiognomic norms of authenticity and truth to the pressure of continuous mimicry."²¹

The importance of imitation in Renaissance pedagogy cannot be overestimated. The most frequently cited imitative practice was in humanist schooling where students learned proper literary technique by copying the form or content of the work of classical authors. Although discussed less frequently by scholars, imitation also figured prominently in the education of proper social behavior and courtly etiquette. Clarissa's position in comparison to the exemplary *figura serpentinata* demonstrates that Clarissa is learning by imitation. Her unwieldy pose establishes her as a young child, not yet adept at the *sprezzatura* of constructing a proper *figura serpentinata*. As she grows and cultivates her talents, she will improve. Education in grace and charm is understood as a cumulative, gradual process that begins early in life.

²⁰ David Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 61, 82–83.

²¹ Harry Berger, "Sprezzatura and the Absence of Grace," *The Book of the Courtier*, ed. Daniel Javitch (New York: Norton, 2002), 295–306.

Titian uses Clarissa's awkward triple twist to further characterize the child in relation to her surroundings. Clarissa leans against a pedestal decorated with a marble relief of two dancing putti. Similar to his other portraits, such as *la Schiavona* and *Portrait of Eleonora Gonzaga*, Titian uses the subject matter of the marble relief and the landscape to reveal further information about the character of the sitter. An examination of Clarissa's general direction of motion shows her to be spiraling toward the pedestal and landscape. If her left foot is seen as the base of the spiral that continues up her left leg and then back across her waist (following the chain), the next logical progression of the position moves her to the right side of the canvas.

The marble relief on the pedestal contains two dancing putti. Luba Freedman has pointed out the physiognomic similarities between Clarissa and the putti, as seen in their hairstyles and facial shapes.²² Freedman suggests that the particular marble relief was chosen to allude to Clarissa's cultural heritage because it was a well known ancient Roman relief from the first century A.D. found in the Venice Museo Archeologico. Although Titian did use this type of additional identification for sitters in other portraits, in the case of the *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi*, the relief has a much broader implication. The spontaneity of the dancing putti provides a positive opposite for Clarissa. In the Renaissance, antiquity was thought of as the most natural era that should be imitated. Our awareness of her awkward twist is heightened when she is compared to the putti.

Freedman understands the corner landscape as an allegorical representation of the child's place in the world. She compares Clarissa's presence in a white dress in a dark parade hall with the white geese in the dark forest of the landscape.²³ While appealing, this suggestion is unlikely. Other cornerspace portrait landscapes (*Portrait of Antonio Porcia e Brugnera* or *Portrait of Eleonora Gonzaga*) have small animals in the background and the practice should be recognized as an inheritance of the Venetian pastoral tradition rather than a deliberate characterization of the sitter. In the case of the *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi*, the landscape functions as a representation of the outside world. Thus, it is significant that Clarissa moves in the direction of the marble relief and that the combination of her forward and turning motion directs her toward spontaneity and the outside world. The marble relief and the landscape hint at what Clarissa will become in her adult life. Her contrived pose and conflicted triple course of movement both reference the gracelessness of the unlearned child and foreshadow the grace she will acquire.

Luba Freedman further argues that Titian's *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi* is innovative because it shows the *child as a child*.²⁴ However, because the references to Clarissa's process of learning by imitation and her "coming-to-be" are so

²² Freedman, "Titian's Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi: The State Portrait of a Child," 165.

²³ *Ibid.*, 174.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 165–180.

deliberate it is more convincing to propose that this is a portrait of the *child as becoming adult*. This proposal eliminates the otherwise troublesome question as to the occasion for the portrait. In his *Lives of the Artists*, Giorgio Vasari established the major function of portraiture as commemorative.

At age two, Clarissa Strozzi, had understandably not done anything warranting commemoration. Therefore to celebrate her *as a child* or to celebrate a particular stage in her life runs contrary to contemporary attitudes and perhaps more significantly, art practice. If the portrait commemorates Clarissa's process of becoming an adult, then the occasion for the portrait becomes a question of Clarissa's future grace and position in society. As suggested in the discussion of *Portrait of Edward IV*, the commemoration of the child's future public role was standard in portraits of children. In the case of the *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi*, Titian has extended the time frame of the commemoration and manages to celebrate both the present gracelessness and the gracefulness to come.

The idea of childhood as the most natural state needs to be abandoned in order to appreciate the *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi*. For Titian, the Strozzi family, and their contemporaries, artful naturalness or *sprezzatura* was cultivated over time and learned through imitation. The inelegance of Titian's *figura serpentinata* is so deliberate and uncharacteristic, that it must hold a deeper meaning especially when considered in relation to Renaissance ideals of grace and decorum. The innovation of Titian's portrait is that he managed to convey Clarissa's process of coming-to-be or her nature and interior state. As Aristotle expressed in *Politics*, "whatever each thing is when its process of coming-to-be is complete, that is what we call the phius [nature] of each thing."²⁵ Titian captured Clarissa's becoming.

The *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi* calls Ariès's thesis into question because it challenges the visual evidence upon which much of his argument is based. Ariès assumed a direct correspondence between artistic representations and the world in which they were created, or more simply, between art and life. If the *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi* was analyzed in the same fashion as the images in Ariès, we may conclude that Clarissa suffered from stiff muscles and liked to stand in front of windows with her dog. This ludicrous suggestion illustrates how incomplete this type of analysis is and the dangers of constructing social models on this foundation. Having explored Titian's artistic characterization and commemoration of Clarissa Strozzi, we cannot conclude universally that sixteenth century parents felt affection for the unique personality of their children. However, we can confidently claim that Titian felt it appropriate for the Strozzi family to commemorate its daughter's becoming, her transition to grace. Even if the final outcome of the

²⁵ Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995). I. ii 1252b 31 or 32.; for the reception of Aristotle by late-medieval artists, see Birgit Franke, "Magnifizenz: Die Tugend der Prachtentfaltung und die französische Kunst um 1400," *Dortmund und Conrad von Soest im spätmittelalterlichen Europa*, ed. Thomas Schilp and Barbara Welzel (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2004), 141–61; here 141–43 and 154.

becoming process is adulthood, Titian painted the girl at age two, an early intermediary stage. The *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi* necessarily proves an awareness of the unique nature of the child, Clarissa is shown in the course of acquisition.

Although Titian's *Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi* may not explicitly point to it, there are visual sources from the Early Modern Period that indicate love and affection for children. As was discussed earlier, formal portraits, which required expensive commissions, were not a standard outlet or expression of these parental sentiments. In his thorough survey, *Renaissance Portraits: European Portrait-Painting in the 14th, 15th, and 16th Centuries*, Lorne Campbell includes two examples of small-scale, portable images of children. One is a 28.5 x 23.5 centimeters painting attributed to the Master of Moulins, *Charles Orlant Dauphin of France*. An inscription on the original frame gives the child's title and includes the date 1494. The portrait was painted and sent to the child's father, Charles VIII, who was campaigning in Italy in 1494. Charles VIII kept the image of his child in a silver chest along with his and his father's seals. Ariès erroneously uses this portrait as evidence of the "pious regard felt for children who had died at an early age."²⁶ The date inscribed on the original frame of the portrait establishes the date as 1494 and the child did not die until December of 1495. We know that the portrait was in the possession of the father prior to the child's death because the portrait was listed in the inventory of spoils seized by Venetian soldiers during the Battle of Fornovo in July of 1495. Thus, the portrait was a memento of a living child sent to an absent parent and devotedly kept in a silver box.²⁷

Campbell also discusses a chalk drawing by Germain Le Mannier, *Charles IX, King of France, aged two*. This image is also quite small (33.5 x 23.4 centimeters) and there are creases in the paper indicating that it had been folded. Scholars link the drawing (along with two other Le Mannier drawings of children) with letters from Catherine de' Medici to her children's governess requesting crayon portraits of her children. The drawings were to be sent to via post and Campbell hypothesizes that folding the drawings may have facilitated shipment.²⁸ The intimate scaling and private purposes of both of these more informal portraits suggests that parents did indeed desire visual mementos of their children, although perhaps not in a formal setting. We must acknowledge that there are few examples of this type of image in contemporary collections. However, this does not necessarily indicate that it was uncommon or atypical for a parent to have this type of image. Given the private purposes and informal mediums, it is likely that few survived the interim five-hundred years to the present day.

Throughout *Centuries of Childhood*, Ariès presents conflicting views about attitudes toward children in the sixteenth century. While he points to the sixteenth

²⁶ Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* 42.

²⁷ Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits: European Portrait-Painting in the 14th, 15th, and 16th Centuries*, 214.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 197.

century as a period in which there was a growing awareness of childhood and the specific needs of children, he also frequently cites Montaigne and his prevalent distaste for children and any type of coddling.²⁹ Using the same cursory analysis of visual sources, Ariès concludes that childhood existed beginning in the seventeenth century and that the cuddling children painted by Franz Hals, Anthony Van Dyck and Charles Lebrun illustrate and prove that children came to be loved and adored by their parents and society. While it is true that representations of children from the seventeenth and succeeding centuries more closely mirror our contemporary conception of childhood, the assumption that this directly signals a societal shift is misleading. Art is governed by a logic and conventions separate from social attitudes and practice; the two influence each other and are in constant dialogue but they are not interchangeable.

²⁹ Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, 38–39; for a critical examination of sixteenth-century pedagogy, see Allison P. Coudert's contribution to this volume.

David Graizbord

(The University of Arizona)

Converso Children Under the Inquisitorial Microscope in the Seventeenth Century

What May the Sources Tell us about Their Lives?

For decades social and cultural historians have been excavating inquisitorial archives to unearth qualitative data regarding the lives and mentalities of medieval and early modern subjects. Of these subjects, *conversos*, also known as “New Christians,” occupy a prominent place in studies of Iberian and Ibero-American heresy trials. These *procesos* now present themselves to us as evidence toward a reconstruction of the history of early modern childhood in at least some of its richness and emotional complexity. Because they also concern the religious behavior of youths and were compiled by inquisitors in the service of the Church and state, the records in question are located at the intersection of what moderns would call the “private” and “public” spheres (but which early moderns may not have understood in that way). The records are neither “literary” in the conventional sense of the term, nor dryly “antiquarian” in the sense of recording data for the mere sake of bureaucratic documentation. Besides offering us advantage of recording (or at least purporting to record) the actual words of pre-modern children, the records are unique in proffering impressionistic yet remarkably sensitive, ethnographic accounts. For their part, the accounts are narratives by which inquisitors record for posterity the processes by which the Holy Office has (supposedly) penetrated the consciousness of deponents, uncovered “truth” and “untruth,” and, if necessary, effected upon these deposing sinners a religious transformation—one measured in part by the deponents’ expression of emotion, for instance, what inquisitors called “signs of contrition”: spontaneous crying, prostration, words conveying woe and deep regret, and the like.

Before embarking on an analysis of the transcripts, it is only prudent to acknowledge a methodological puzzle has confronted all studies of inquisitorial

depositions: Do the recorded depositions accurately reflect the deponents' experiences? If so, to what degree, and how do we know this? In my view, these questions remain open; at any rate, they may not have sweeping and definitive answers. It is clear, however, that a prevailing assumption among historians of the Holy Office, of *conversos*, and of Sephardi Jewry, is that much of what New Christians said under interrogation about their own lives and religious identities is "true." An example of this is Renee Levine Melammed's otherwise admirable *Heretics or Daughters of Israel: The Crypto-Jewish Women of Castile*, an influential work that almost entirely sidesteps any discussion of the difficulties of interpreting recorded testimony and thus presents that material mostly as though its trustworthiness were self-evident. Indeed, the notion is still prevalent in academic and popular circles that, because many New Christians confessed under the stress of interrogation that they were "Judaizers," the Holy Office was realistic in approaching *conversos* as a bloc of crypto-Jews. Proponents of this view have often written as if Jewishness were an inherent characteristic,¹ one that at the very least rendered most if not all *conversos* "potential Jews" (to use a well-known formulation).² An opposing position has it that inquisitorial evidence collected against *conversos* was largely bogus, either because New Christian deponents "lied" to

¹ The writing of popular authors and self-styled champions of contemporary "Marranism" have given rather blatant expression to this common assumption about the vast majority of New Christians—notwithstanding occasional concessions to the effect that many *conversos* were, in fact, genuine Christians. One author, for instance, writes with frank admiration about "the great majority of Jews who remained in Spain as Marranos," and of "their stubborn efforts to maintain their essential connection to their spiritual wholeness. . . . They had something deep inside that kept alive the link with one another and with their [Jewish] heritage, even under the most stressful circumstances." (Emphasis added). Trudy Alexi, *The Mezuzah in the Madonna's Foot: Marranos and Other Secret Jews: A Woman Discovers Her Spiritual Heritage* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 18. Thinking of the more respectable plain of responsible scholarly analysis, I am also reminded of the oddly categorical observation of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi that the flight of *conversos* from the Iberian Peninsula, even those who escaped involuntarily to avoid arrest by the Holy Office, was "itself already" indicative of "an intense Jewish commitment" on the escapees' part. Id., "The Re-education of Marranos in the Seventeenth Century." *The Third Annual Rabbi Louis Feinberg Memorial Lecture in Judaic Studies*, March 26, 1980 (Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati, 1980), 2. To be sure, as a whole, Yerushalmi's body of work on *conversos* reflects a much more nuanced approach, although his leaning in favor of the *conversos*-as-latent-Jews thesis seems to me quite clear. An especially important, if implicit early presentation of that thesis is that of Yitzhak Baer, arguably the most important non-Iberian scholar of Jewish life in Christian Spain. He wrote, for example, that *conversos* were "suffering Jews" who "defended their existence and their religion for a very long time in a secret struggle" that the Inquisition made tragic by delivering "Jewish martyrs to the fires in greater or lesser numbers depending on the political situation." (Emphasis added). Id., *Galut*, trans. Robert Warshaw (New York: Schocken, 1947), 93, 95.

² I am alluding to the famous formulation of I. S. Revah in "Les Marranes," *Revue des Etudes Juives* 118 (1959–1960): 29–77; here 55.

pacify their interrogators, or because the Holy Office "falsified" or "distorted" the content of depositions, or for both reasons.³ While not entirely wrong, this interpretation too is founded on what strikes me as an overly rigid and somewhat naive positivism. Like the dominant view, the argument that *conversos* were actually "Christians" (not secret "Jews") assumes that matters of self-identity, which pertain to the utmost and most complex subjectivity, may always be cast in terms of simple "true/false" scenarios. Most disappointing is that proponents of the dominant and opposing interpretations, like the inquisitors themselves, usually posit rather static ideals of "Jewish" and "Christian" authenticity, and proceed to reify them by measuring *conversos'* self-identities against those abstractions.⁴

We are left, then, with the challenge of offering viable alternatives to essentialist interpretations. The work of Carlo Ginzburg and other micro-historians suggests one such option. Ginzburg has proposed that inquisitorial dossiers preserve discrepancies between the stereotypes of religious criminality that underlay inquisitorial questioning and the actual testimony that deponents supplied. For Ginzburg, those discrepancies reveal a "gap" between learned and popular cultures. He further argues that the gap allows us to discern spontaneously-rendered, and hence reliable evidence of the true mentalities of ordinary men and women.⁵ Here I explore that gap as it emerged in a few depositions that young *conversos* rendered to the Spanish Holy Office in the seventeenth century. I concentrate on the 1600s because they comprised a period when anti-*converso* sentiment in Spain rose in reaction to the immigration of hundreds (perhaps thousands) of Portuguese New Christians to that country. The influx had been precipitated by the assumption of the Portuguese crown by Philip II, the Spanish monarch, whose policy to stimulate Spain's economy—and generate a new, vulnerable source of ready cash for officers of the Habsburg state—consisted partly of luring Luso-*conversos* to Spain with favorable terms of settlement.⁶

My aim here is to identify reliable information that the depositions afford regarding the familial lives and motivations of the *converso* youths without

³ A classic and still influential statement of this view is Antônio José Saraiva, *Inquisição e cristãos-novos*, 5th ed. (Lisbon: Editorial Estampa 1994).

⁴ For examples of these approaches, see the scholarly works cited in n. 1 and n.3, above.

⁵ See for example Carlo Ginzburg, Introduction to *The Night Battles* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), xviii.

⁶ On this subject, see for instance Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, *Los judeoconversos en España y América* (Madrid: Ediciones Istmo, 1971), 62–64, and Bernardo Lopez Belinchón, *Honra, libertad y hacienda. Hombres de negocios y judíos sefardíes* (Alcalá de Henares: Instituto Internacional de Estudios Sefardíes y Andalusíes, Universidad de Alcalá, 2001), 37–50, 67–168.

imputing a reified “Jewishness” or “Christianness” to *conversos*. Underlying this aim is a question that motivates much of my work: namely, how do ordinary subjects make sense of their own lives; more specifically, how did *converso* subjects determine who and what they were in relation to social conventions, religious norms, overt pressure, and other circumstances.⁷ To the list of voices already informing our understanding of the history of childhood—including those refracted through belles-lettres, hagiographies, pictorial art, and so on—how might we incorporate those emanating from youths who testified in inquisitorial hearings?⁸ A reconstruction of the experiences that individual New Christians underwent during their impressionable, early years is, I believe, crucial to answering these queries because the reconstruction may illuminate key ways in which these subjects’ respective mentalities took shape.

I start with the well-known case of Andrés Núñez. He was a six- or seven-year old *converso* whose parents had moved from Portugal to Castile around 1590. In 1630, a woman found Andrés in the streets of Madrid, where he had been wandering and sleeping under a sack. He had been abandoned when the Inquisition had imprisoned his aged parents, elder siblings, and some of their friends and neighbors. All the detainees had fallen prey to serious yet rather common *conversophobic* allegations—for instance, that they did not eat *tocino* (pig fat), that they avoided all work on Saturdays, and so on.⁹

Not knowing what to do with Andrés, the woman brought him to the home of one Agustín de Vergara. There the boy allegedly claimed that his parents were not only secret Judaizers, but that they, his siblings, as well as several of the family’s neighbors—all of them *conversos* of Portuguese origin—had ritually abused an effigy of Christ in a “secret synagogue.” These claims, not surprisingly, prompted an inquisitorial investigation in which Andrés figured as the principal informant. The inquest soon burgeoned into the cause célèbre known as the Affair of the *Cristo de la Paciencia*. At its core were Andrés’s sensational allegations that the battered effigy had patiently bled and spoken to its abusers in a miraculous show of divine suffering.¹⁰ To the Holy Office, of course, the “miracle” of the effigy

⁷ On the pivotal matter of acculturation during childhood, see, in this volume, Allison P. Coudert’s discussion of child-rearing tracts from the early modern Protestant world.

⁸ See Albrecht Classen’s introduction to this volume for a more thorough discussion of the problem of sources for the reconstruction of the history of family relations and childhood.

⁹ Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto: Isaac Cardoso: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Marranism and Jewish Apologetics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1971), 115.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 118–119.

exposed *conversos'* "Jewish" lust for deicide, proved God's presence on earth, and validated the supposedly redemptive power of psychic and physical pain.¹¹

From the vantage point of the present inquiry, perhaps the most obvious aspect that emerges from Andrés's trajectory from the safety of his parents' home to the heart of a scandal is his abject vulnerability to the machinations of inquisitorial officers, particularly to the officers' attempts to mold a coherent story of "crime" and spiritual "enlightenment" out of the raw material of various testimonies. These functionaries, after all, had been responsible for Andrés's abandonment and homelessness. Later, they used him to construct and "substantiate" legal claims against members of his family — including his two sisters, aged twelve and sixteen. Significantly, none of the inquisitorial dossiers to which Andrés contributed with his testimony bear the slightest indication that officers of the Holy Tribunal were concerned with Andrés's own religious beliefs and behavior, much less any other aspect of his life (except, of course, what he had supposedly seen his parents do to the image of Christ). It evidently did not matter to the functionaries that Andrés was the son of the same (allegedly) nefarious criminals they had imprisoned. Because of the boy's youth, no oath was ever administered to him for purposes of interrogation.¹² No one made any but the most cursory arrangements for his well-

¹¹ On the symbolic use of Christian children to give force to messages such as these in judeophobic libels, see Diane Peters Auslander's contribution in this volume.

¹² On the subject of the admissibility of testimony rendered by minors to the Spanish Holy Tribunals, Henry Charles Lea comments,

From the earliest times the Church had prescribed fourteen as the minimum age for witnesses and, in Spain, where majority was not attained until the age of twenty-five, minors younger than that were not admitted in criminal cases. Accordingly, in the records of the Inquisition, witnesses are customarily described as *mayores* or *menores*, but no difference was made in accepting their testimony, and Rojas tells us that formerly he thought that heresy could not be proved by two witnesses under twenty-five, but the rule is that the *fiscal* [inquisitorial prosecutor] is not bound to prove that his witnesses are legal; everyone is presumed to be so and his evidence must be received until objection is made, which, considering that their identity was most carefully concealed from the defence, is tantamount to saying that none could be rejected on that score. Witnesses of the tenderest years were therefore admitted without scruple. In the case of Juan Vazquez, tried in Toledo for sorcery in 1605, one of the witnesses was a girl of twelve. In the same tribunal, in 1579, a witness only eleven or twelve was heard against Francisco del Espinar, for maltreating a cross, and the culprit, who was only thirteen, was held to be responsible. Witnesses under twelve were not sworn, because they were deemed incapable of understanding the nature of the oath, but their evidence was received and recorded without it, as appears in the report of a Valencia *auto de fe* in 1607. In the Roman Inquisition the canon law was treated with more respect, and the *fiscal* was not allowed to present a witness below the age of fourteen.

being during the inquest. Evidently the inquisitors and their lay assistants were content to approach Andrés—whom they patronizingly called “Andresillo”—not as a human being with needs and wants, but as a rather innocuous and perfectly transparent conduit of religious truth, the truth that Christ was a long-suffering God, that He was real, that He had unmasked *conversos* as evil “Jews,” and so forth. The point is that Andrés was merely assigned an instrumental role in the prosecutions. I suspect that that role followed directly from the inquisitors’ perception that he was utterly immature and therefore completely pliant to their desires. As inquisitor Fernandez Portocarrero put it, “*este muchacho es de poca razon y capacidad, como tontillo.*” (This boy is of low intelligence and capability, like a little fool).¹³

Still, the documentary record preserves faint evidence that Andrés was able to exert a very limited autonomy. For instance, whenever the investigators felt that he was not fulfilling the role of informant satisfactorily—for example, that his accounts were hesitant and inconsistent—he responded by supplying whatever information he thought might appease them, although there is no evidence that the Holy Office explicitly pressured or threatened him with torture. Notably, Andrés only claimed to have seen the statue of Christ bleed, cry, and beg for mercy when the Tribunal’s officers had noted contradictions in his testimony and began to air doubts as to his credibility and mental faculties.¹⁴ Judging by the intensification of the inquest immediately after Andrés appended the details of the effigy’s supposed behavior, his response had the intended effect of dispelling any lingering qualms about his usefulness. Quite understandably, Andrés was eager to please, even impress, the adults who controlled his fate. He attempted to do this by supplying them with testimony so vehement, sensational, and overreaching that it strikes the modern reader as childish lies. For instance, admonished at one juncture to tell the truth without defaming anyone, the boy made a sign of the cross with his hands, and

swore by [the cross] and by his life that *it was [indeed] true* that he had seen *more than fifty times*. . . his father [and several others] get together, and they closed the first door to the chamber’s entry, and the door to the other chamber that he has described

Id., *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, 4 vols. (New York: McMillan, 1906–1907), 2: 536–537.

¹³ Archivo Histórico Nacional, Inquisición de Toledo, Leg. 140, Caj2, fol. 28r. (Henceforth the name of the archive will be cited as “AHN”). Quoted in Ignacio Pulido Serrano, *Injurias a Cristo: Religión, política, y antijudaísmo en el siglo XVII* (Alcalá de Henares: Instituto Internacional de Estudios Sefardíes y Andalusíes, Universidad de Alcalá), 135. This study, especially 123–155 and 269–344, is the most exhaustive treatment I know of the affair.

¹⁴ Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto* 117.

and where his parents lived, and they beat a [figure of] Christ in the kitchen of the first two rooms, his mother . . . and the others he has mentioned.¹⁵ (Emphasis added)

When he was asked about the dimensions of the effigy, Andrés said simply that it was “very large.” He was then prodded to specify, so he pointed to Pedro Pacheco, an inquisitorial officer, alleging that the figure had been as large as Pacheco, “and that [the Christ] had [a] black robe [like Pacheco’s],” yet “[Andrés] could not say whether [the figure] was made of wood or something else.”¹⁶ Pacheco himself later inspected the place where Andrés had alleged that his parents had hanged and tied the Christ-effigy, and found that “there is not sufficient space to place a Christ of the size that [the boy] has indicated.”¹⁷ However, later still, an inquisitor read Andrés’s own deposition to him, and the boy requested to add the following grisly details:

[Andrés said that] the thorns with which [his parents] whipped the Christ, he saw them picked from the house’s garden. *And his parents put needles on the spines, and when they struck Him the Christ said that, why were they striking him? And his parents would respond that even if it pained and embittered Him, they had to strike Him.* (Emphasis added).¹⁸

The lurid quality of these latter claims—claims which the interrogator evidently accepted as fact without hesitation—is but one indication that, as a young child, Andrés was highly suggestible as to the kind of testimony that would be appealing to the prurient imagination of his captors.

The boy’s case, then, illustrates an extreme imbalance of power that existed between young witnesses and the Holy Office. The case urges us to assume children’s manipulability in our analysis of inquisitorial trials that involved them. And yet, even in the extreme case of Andrés Núñez, the very susceptibility of children who deposed before the *Santo Oficio* offers us a rare opportunity to reconstruct their experiences. There is a paradox at work in this regard: While children’s testimony echoes the Holy Office’s expectations of them, the sheer artlessness with which several of the youths conveyed their information and attempted to meet those expectations reveals a cultural “gap” (as Ginzburg defines it) between questioners and informants. As I will illustrate below, young *converso* deponents wallowed in what Ginzburg calls “discrepancies” because, like Andrés Núñez, these informants were not always capable of deposing persuasively, much less acting to protect themselves under the harsh light of religious scrutiny.

¹⁵ Quoted in Pulido Serrano, *Injurias a Cristo*, 136.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 144.

Luis de Aguilar Aragón, a seventeen year-old native of the French Basque country and a son of expatriate *conversos*, is a noteworthy example of this phenomenon. His inquisitorial case shows how the youth's abysmal ignorance of Christian propriety, as well as his candor, opened him to a form of inquisitorial manipulation so extreme that it resulted in the radical alteration of his legal, religious and hence social status. Such were the perils of being considered a "child" by the Holy Office. The alteration, incidentally, is an outcome I have never encountered in cases involving unbaptized adults who deposed before inquisitorial tribunals.¹⁹

We learn of young Aguilar from the following fragmentary report:

At the Inquisition in Valladolid on 11 July, 1675, Luis de Aguilar Aragón testified that he had been detained at the village of Alcaciras by [officers of] lay justice in that village. [H]e [later] gave an account to the [Holy] Tribunal that the [local] *corregidor*, while surveying the [village's] inn, had found them [meaning Aguilar and his traveling companions] and had asked them to recite the Christian doctrine, and ordered him to cross himself. Yet, he [Aguilar] did not know how to do it; and that, since [he, Aguilar] was Portuguese, [the *corregidor*] presumed that he [Aguilar] was Jewish. [Subsequently] the [inquisitorial] Tribunal [of Valladolid] requested that he be brought before it along with two companions. And having been brought to this Inquisition, he [Aguilar] was examined, and it was found that he was circumcised. At a hearing he asked of his own volition, and that he was granted on 2 October of [16]74. . . he said that he was a Jew by nation, and indicated who had taught him the [non-Christian] rites that he has performed. He said while testifying against accomplices that he did not know if he had been baptized, although it seemed to him that he may already be [baptized]²⁰ . . . upon which matter [his interrogators sent a query to] the Inquisition of Navarre so that the manner of baptizing the children of observers [of the Law of Moses] who go to Bayonne [France] would be known. A First Hearing was arranged for him in the manner usual [for people suspected of acting against the Catholic Faith], and by a mandate of [this Tribunal] of 20 July 1675, the Tribunal ordered that this prisoner be baptized. . . and absolved *ad cautelam* [?]. (Emphasis added).²¹

¹⁹ As part of my research I have read hundreds of inquisitorial cases from Spain and Portugal. None of them have involved an order to convert a minor to Christianity.

²⁰ Hundreds of *converso* expatriates who settled in the French southwest during the 1600s adopted normative Judaism under the tutelage of self-styled rabbinic emissaries from various Sephardi communities. Yet, because Judaism had been banned in France since the fourteenth century, several of the exiles continued to attend mass and have their children baptized in local parishes until the late 1600s. By then, the veneer of Catholicity did not require much upkeep, so to speak, as the French crown seldom persecuted Iberian "Judaizers" on French soil. David Graizbord, *Souls in Dispute: Converso Identities in Iberia and the Jewish Diaspora* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 67.

²¹ AHN, Inquisición de Toledo, Leg. 183, Exp. 4, (1672–1678), fol. 1r. This dossier, however, is against

Why did Aguilar travel to arch-Catholic Spain without taking at least the minimal precaution of learning how to cross himself? Why did his interrogators take the highly unusual and irregular step of having him baptized, when he was already cooperating with their investigation and could have been held liable for abetting "judaizing," baptized or not?²²

Whatever the answers, several dossiers from the 1600s preserve textured information about other young *conversos* whose awkwardness as informants is as glaring as Aguilar's. (Here it is worth noting how fortunate historians are that, for all the coerciveness of inquisitorial practices, the bureaucrats who staffed the Spanish tribunals were still interested in recording at least some of the witnesses' actual words). In particular, surviving dossiers preserve evidence of power struggles between children and their elders. In these struggles, young declarants approached religion as a vehicle of rebellion against familial authority. By alleging that their parents and relatives had tried to incorporate them in a life of Judaizing, the youths sought to settle scores and claim a measure of personal independence. The Holy Office, for its part, served the youths as a guarantor of vengeance and of a limited (yet still exhilarating) sense of their own importance. Judges and prosecutors lent these guileless denunciators the proverbial "shoulder to cry on." More significantly, they conferred religious legitimacy on the youths' rather quotidian complaints about the strictness of their parents and elder relatives.²³

The case of the young apprentice Enrique de Paz is a case in point. In 1622 he denounced virtually his entire family after becoming entangled in what he described as "a great row" (*una gran pesadumbre*) with his cousin and master Domingo Gómez Núñez. The boy all but admitted that he had caused the spark that had ignited the struggle by making a bar of soap without Gómez Núñez's permission. Yet, this dispute was merely the latest of Enrique's grievances. When he had been a young child, he said, his parents had introduced him to "Judaic" practices that he had found strange and difficult to perform, for instance, fasting at great lengths in observance of vague "holidays." Enrique alleged that he had sometimes resisted these practices by secretly withdrawing to a basement to eat

Teresa de Salazar. The original dossier against Aguilar has likely been lost.

²² Particularly from the time of its creation in 1478 to 1492, the unified Spanish Inquisition prosecuted and sentenced several Jews for their alleged promotion of crypto-Judaism among *conversos*. A particularly disastrous example is the cluster of trials of Jews who were implicated in the blood libel of the "Holy Child of La Guardia." On this libel see for example Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, trans. Louis Schoffman, with an introduction by Benjamin R. Gampel (1959–1962; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1992), 2: 398–421.

²³ I base the latter formulation, as well as my outline and examination of the cases of Enrique de Paz and Duarte Montesinos, on my brief discussion in Graizbord, *Souls in Dispute*.

forbidden foods “so as not to do what his father told him to do” (*por no hacer lo que . . . su padre le decía*).²⁴ It is significant that the young man did not articulate any meaningful objections to the “Law of Moses” as such, even though this is precisely the kind of testimony his interrogators expected him to provide. Their standard protocol included questions such as these—and I paraphrase closely the formulas found in numerous inquisitorial dossiers:

¿Que razones tuvo para apartarse de la ley de Cristo?
 Qué le ha movido a apartarse de la Ley de Moisés?
 ¿Cree en la hostia consagrada?
 ¿Está arrepentido?
 ¿Reconoce su error?
 ¿Tiene propósito de enmendarse y está dispuesto a cumplir la penitencia?

(What reasons did he have for distancing himself from the Law of Christ? What has moved him to separate himself from the Law of Moses?
 Does he believe in the consecrated Host?
 Does he feel regret?
 Does he recognize his error?
 Does he intend to rectify himself and is he ready to fulfill penitence?)

Enrique’s true aim, it seems, was not to impugn or accept religious beliefs and practices either at home or at his interrogators’ desk. Rather, it was to defy a father and a cousin whose authority he found stifling, and perhaps even to overturn that authority. The very fact that Enrique admitted to his clash with Domingo Gómez Nunez may well constitute a Ginzburgian “discrepancy,” for according to the Holy Office’s own rules of evidence that admission actually weakened Enrique’s case against Gómez Nuñez, and by extension, the case against his parents and other relatives. Enrique evidently was not mindful of the fact that his questioners were required to disqualify witnesses who were “personal enemies” of the accused—in other words, subjects who harbored, and in this case admitted, private grievances against the people they denounced. Such was Enrique’s intoxication with his newfound sense of power that he all but admitted that he wished to be rid of his overbearing cousin, leave Spain and build a new life elsewhere: “*Ansimismo declara que él esta de partida para las Indias, acomodado con el castellano don Gonzalo de Medina, [y] que de miedo del [dicho] su padre y de los [dichos] Domingo Gómez y sus hermanos...ha determinado hacer dicha jornada.*”²⁵ (“And in the same manner he declares that he is about to depart for the Indies, already fixed up with the Castilian, Don Gonzalo de Medina, and that he has resolved to make that

²⁴ AHN, Inquisicion de Toledo, Leg. 152, Exp. 1 (1621–22), not foliated.

²⁵ Ibid., not foliated. In modern Spanish the excerpt would read “. . . por miedo . . .”

journey for fear of [retribution from] his father, and Domingo Gómez Núñez and his brothers. . . .").

A similar resentment and desire for personal emancipation motivated other complaints that *converso* adolescents articulated at the Holy Tribunals. For instance, in 1632 the Inquisition arrested fifteen year-old Duarte Montesinos to investigate an altercation in which he had been injured. During his first hearing, the boy explained that one afternoon he had followed a sacramental procession and helped to solicit donations for the cult of the Eucharist without his father's permission. In response, the father had ordered one of the family's employees beat Duarte with a stick. Several eyewitnesses, including the boy's sister, corroborated the youth's version of the incident. They further claimed that Duarte had bitterly threatened to denounce his family to the Holy Office in retribution for the assault. The adolescent ultimately admitted that he had indeed made the threats, and castigated himself and his entire family as "Judaizers." Yet at first he attempted rather clumsily to soften the effects of his testimony by claiming that he had merely issued the threats to intimidate his parents, and not because he had truly wished to have anyone prosecuted. This pitiful apology, of course, made no difference to Duarte's judges and prosecutors, and, like the alleged threats themselves, rings genuine for that very reason. Feelings of confusion, regret, and ambivalence simply did not fit the inquisitorial "script," so to speak.

Tales of religious coercion such as Duarte's may or may not be trustworthy in every respect, particularly as regards claims of Christian piety and crypto-Judaism. Nonetheless, the accounts strike me as fundamentally credible in their depiction of distressing yet rather pedestrian instances of familial strife. It is telling, for instance, that while young tattle-tales such as Enrique de Paz and Duarte Montesinos usually complied with the inquisitorial imperative of incriminating their families, very few of these youths indicated that they had discussed the meaning of the Law of Moses with their parents, relatives, or other alleged religious initiators. As one *converso* recalled about his early years,

y viendo que eran sus padres los que se lo decían, y pareciéndole le aconsejarían lo que estuviese mejor, les dio crédito, y dijo que haría lo que le aconsejaban y guardaría dicha ley de Moisés. (Emphasis added).²⁶

(Seeing that it was *his parents* who told this to him—and it seemed to him that they would advise what was best—he gave them credit, and said that he would do what they counseled and would keep the Law of Moses).

²⁶ AHN, Inquisición de Toledo, Leg. 169, Exp. 10 (1663–68), fol. 49r.

By contrast, young declarants were often keen to accuse their adult counterparts of subjecting them to scorn, withholding inheritance, inflicting physical punishment (as we have seen in the case of Duarte Montesinos), threatening to marry them to more obedient relatives, and similar abuses. Along these lines, one declarant claimed that a member of his clan had tried to embarrass him into renouncing his intention to depose before the Holy Office, not by defending Judaism—which is perhaps what the inquisitors would have preferred to hear—but by appealing to the young man's sense of familial honor. "I am shocked," the man had allegedly told the youth, "that you, the son of such good parents [*hijo de tan buenos padres*], is involved [with the Inquisition], that hatred and rancor should bring you to do such evil [to your family]." ²⁷

Though they are condemnatory, narratives such as this do not conform to the mythological picture of "Judaic" evil that inquisitors and their supporters sought to project onto *conversos*—and did so most extravagantly in case of the *Cristo de la Paciencia*. A majority of the accusations I have surveyed are clearly vindictive yet fundamentally realistic in their portrayal of what social workers and psychologists today would perhaps call "dysfunctional family relationships." At worst, most of the young declarants conveyed that their parents and relatives were strict, not diabolical, in other words, that these adults were flawed yet otherwise normal people who expected the deponents to defer to them as a matter of conventional familial propriety.

Obligations of kinship, familial attachments, as well as whatever sense young *converso* deponents had of the primacy of these social bonds came under inquisitorial assault virtually from the instant interrogation began. From the official point of view of the Holy Tribunal, all that the deponents had to do, to be sure, was relieve their souls from the burden of sin, and thus permit divine Grace to reincorporate them into the body of the faithful. Yet the operation of inquisitorial power clearly privileged religious-institutional over familial-customary ties of loyalty. It is worthwhile to remember that according to Nicolau Eymerich's influential *Manual of Inquisitors* (1376), the relationship between individuals and their God had clear precedence over the parent-child bond. In the following passages, Eymerich depicts the Church's as a superordinate "parent" to all humanity, regardless the faith or condition:

The universal power of Christ is clearly affirmed in Psalm 71 ('O God, give the king Your power of judgment, and to the King's children Your justice'). The Christ would not be a good *pater familias* if he had not bequeathed to His Vicar on earth [by whose

²⁷ AHN, Inquisicion de Toledo, Leg. 177, Exp. 2 (1650–1653), fol. 52r.

institutional authority all inquisitors fulfilled their functions] absolute power over all men.²⁸

Very evidently, the Inquisitor shall [be authorized to] pursue every layperson, whatever his station and condition, who is a heretic, suspect, or simply infamous. This is explicitly [authorized by] the Bull *Prae Punctis* of Urban IV.²⁹

In the practical terms of inquisitorial *procesos*, these official devaluations of genealogical kinship, and by extension of ties of familial affection legitimized the exposure of the emotional lives of young deponents to the harsh light of scrutiny, a scrutiny that strikes us as extreme even for its time (except outside of the confessional) despite the fact that “privacy” had not yet emerged as a “human right” in the West. What is more, such exposure was often a prelude to a radical realignment of loyalties—at least of the youths’ professed loyalties. The example of fourteen year-old María Petronila de Villareal, an orphan who was suspected of Judaizing, gives us a detailed view of how this realignment proceeded, as well as of the emotional agony the transformation was liable to cause.

In 1718, in one of a series of inquisitorial hearings that would continue until 1721, Villareal’s resistance to her questioners’ demands for information about her own “Judaizing” and that of others began to crumble. The girl finally acknowledged that in order to appease the Holy Office she would have to incriminate and sever at least some of her ties with her two aunts and cousin—the very women who had rescued her from destitution and been her affectionate guardians since her infancy:

. . . with many tears [the defendant] said [to her interrogator], ‘if I did not know, Sir, that my aunt, whom I love so much, as if she were my mother, would be killed [by order of the Holy Office], I would say many things that I know about her. Therefore tell me, Your Lordship [sic], if she has died; because at first [when we were both arrested] she [my aunt] was in a prison cell next to mine, and I would hear her cough and cry, and knew then that she was living; yet now I do not know whether she is alive or dead; and I, once I leave this place, do not necessarily have to live with her anymore, and will only try to see her because of how much I love her.’³⁰

²⁸ Nicolau Eymerich, *Le manuel des inquisiteurs*, trans. Louis Sala-Molins (Paris: Mouton Editeur, 1973), 76. A recent discussion of Eymeric and his *oeuvre* is offered by Claudia Heimann, *Nicolaus Eymerich (vor 1320–1399) – praedicator veridicus, inquisitor intrepidus, doctor egregius. Leben und Werk eines Inquisitors* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2001).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 195.

³⁰ AHN, Inquisición de Toledo, Leg. 188, exp. 8 (1718–21), fols. 202r–202v.

To this her interrogator replied that, indeed, if María de Villareal told “the truth” about her aunts, she would convince the Tribunal to be merciful in proceeding with her case. He was quite emphatic, however, that the girl should “not pay heed to any respect” owed to her aunts and cousin, and that for the sake of “reverence for God” she should “unburden” her conscience fully, refraining from hiding anything (“que no hiziese caso de respecto alguno hazia la [dicha] Da Maria, Da Manuela y Agna ni otra alguna persona y q por reberenzia de Dios Nro Sr descargase su conzienzia sin callar cosa alguna”) (fol. 202v). Perceiving that her Christian pride and respectability were at stake, the adolescent replied that her aim was to leave the Inquisitorial domain in good condition (*salir bien de aqui*) and with her honor, “if [in fact] her aunt did not come out of [the inquisitorial prison] alive” (fol. 203r). A few folios later, the girl’s betrayal of her aunt is explicit and unambiguous:

[The defendant] asks that the [formal] accusation [lodged against her] be read to her again. When the opening had been read to her she said that God should not grant her soul salvation if she has committed any [wrong], [and that] neither is she any of the things [namely, a heretic and an accessory to heresy] that the opening section of the accusation [alleges], and that God had tossed her onto this world to [undergo] travails, and she will be glad to have done something to confess it [sic]; *and that she is charged with that which her aunt has done merely because she is her niece. [lo que su tia a echo como ella es sobrina se lo cargan a ella]* (Emphasis added). (fols. 207r–207v).

Here it seems to me that the girl’s words unwittingly capture the Orwellian moment in which inquisitorial pressure caused her to acquiesce in the transformation of her social condition as a youth and subordinate member of a family—notice her insinuation that she was innocent *because* she was but someone’s niece, not quite an autonomous adult—into the very means to destroy that family and rip her consciousness from its affective moorings. We detect a hint of the crushing emotional weight of this fateful moment in the steady deterioration of the girl’s handwriting: While she usually ratified her early depositions with a firm and steady signature, spelling out her full name, by the time she had denounced her beloved aunt, and especially after undergoing sentencing and public humiliation, María signs the documents in her dossier in a trembling hand. In the later documents she often renders her name as “Maria Pretonita,” “Mariapetolabialla real” and other mangled variants. It is as if the girl’s sense of her personhood had been somehow compressed and distorted.

To be sure, the unsophisticated testimony of *converso* children such as María Petronila de Villareal may not permit much more than incomplete impressions of their powerlessness in a traditional world dominated by adults, and in particular, of the psychological stress to which that weakness condemned the youths. But

perhaps this is not so bad if we consider that writing on the history of *conversos* has long relied on overly ambitious, indeed sweeping conceptions of identity. To paraphrase Jaime Contreras, when approaching *conversos*, it is perhaps best to put our eyes and ears close to the ground to explore the low and pedestrian horizons of their lives.³¹ There we may find evidence of their complex *mentalité*.³²

³¹ Jaime Contreras Contreras, "Criptojudaismo en la España moderna: clientelismo y linaje," *Inquisição: Ensaio sobre mentalidade, heresies e arte*, comp. Anita Novinsky and Maria Luiza Tucci Carneiro (Sao Paulo: EdUSP, 1992), 272.

³² The archival research on which this chapter is based was completed with the generous support of the Maurice Amado Foundation and the Program for Cultural Cooperation between Spain's Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport and American Universities.

Allison P. Coudert

(University of California at Davis)

Educating Girls in Early Modern Europe and America

As Albrecht Classen and the other contributors to this volume have demonstrated, the grim picture Phillipe Ariès paints of childhood before the eighteenth century fails to take into account the very real affection and concern the majority of parents had for their children irrespective of high mortality rates.¹ The evidence they offer makes a convincing case that strong emotional bonds existed between parents and children in the Middle Ages. The same can be said for the early modern period, which is the subject of this essay.

On the basis of such admittedly varied sources as Eucharius Rösslin's *Rosengarten*, a sixteenth century treatise on the bearing and rearing of children, Johannes Coler's seventeenth-century *Haussbuch*, which deals with similar issues, and Montaigne's essay "On the Education of Children," we can now see that much of what was considered so original in Rousseau's account of childrearing in *Émile* was common currency in the early modern period, and even before. In these early modern works one finds the same concern for the health and well-being of children, the conviction that education should not be coercive but contribute to the development of an autonomous yet socially responsible individual, the belief that curiosity is to be encouraged, and the realization that the physical body must be educated along with the mind.

While these progressive ideas stand out, what stands out in equal measure is how gender specific they were. They were only applicable to male children. Montaigne's essay refers to "children" but his subject matter is exclusively boys.² Furthermore, the revised and relatively rosy picture of childhood education in the early modern period minimizes the very real underlying view among parents and

¹ Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: a Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Knopf, 1962).

² Rousseau was adamant in rejecting autonomy for girls: "Unable to judge for themselves, they should accept the judgment of father and husband as that of the church" (*Émile, or On Education*, trans. by B. Foxley [London and New York: Dent and Dutton, 1966], Bk V, 332).

educators that children are inherently evil. Consequently new methods of instruction were required, and these were predicated on an unprecedented degree of mind control, established through the inculcation of humiliation, shame, and guilt.

It is the purpose of this paper to discuss this shift in educational goals, while at the same time documenting the radically different education prescribed for boys and girls in the early modern period. It is my contention that the increasing restrictions on the education of girls reflected both the profound societal changes accompanying the decline of feudalism and the rise of bourgeois culture and the negative view of human nature promulgated by Protestants but shared to a large extent by Catholics. The emphasis on the inherently evil nature of children reflected the increased emphasis on human depravity, but this emphasis had a disproportionate effect on females inasmuch as human depravity was associated with sexuality, especially deviant female sexuality. In this regard, Catholics and Protestant males were pretty much joined at the hip in their concern to control females.

Stephen Greenblatt and others have demonstrated that anxiety about precisely what constituted "the self" increased during the Renaissance and early modern period as an aristocratic feudal social order gave way to bourgeois culture with new definitions of power and class. Dichotomies such as active versus passive, dominant versus subordinate, reason versus sense, and public versus private had to be reformulated for an increasingly centralized, commercialized urban society. Since these categories were themselves subsumed under the broader antithesis between masculine and feminine, the issue of what it was to be male and female assumed fundamental importance. This led to a hardening of gender stereotypes and a more rigid enforcing of gender hierarchy that can be traced in court records, marriage manuals, dramas, paintings, songs, sermons, and, most important for this essay, tracts devoted to the education of girls.

There is no question that in the early modern period most parents dearly loved their children. John Robinson (1575–1625), who ministered to the Puritans before they boarded the Mayflower, claimed, "It is natural for parents tenderly to love all their children."³ John Locke (1632–1704) concurred, describing parents as "being wisely ordained to love their children."⁴ In a poignant passage in his diary, Ralph Josselin (1616–1683), the Vicar of Earls Colne, Essex, reveals his deep love for his little daughter Mary on the day of her death, which, as he says, occurred when she was "8 yeares and 45 dayes old":

³ Philip J. Greven, *Child-Rearing Concepts, 1628–1861: Historical Sources* (Itasca, Ill: P.E.Peacock Publishers, Inc, 1973), 17.

⁴ Philip J. Greven, *Child-Rearing Concepts*, 20.

... it was a pretious child, a bundle of myrrhe, a bundle of sweetnes, shee was a child of ten thousand, full of wisdom, woman-like gravity, knowledge, sweet expre[ssions of God, apt in her learning,] tender hearted and loving, an [obed]ient child [to us]. It was free from [the rudenesse of] little children, it was to us as a boxe of sweet ointment, which now its broken smells more deliciously then it did before, Lord I rejoyce I had such a present for thee, it was patient in sickness, thankfull to admiration; it lived desired and dyed lamented, thy memory is and will bee sweete unto mee. . . .⁵

Statements like these clearly demonstrate the existence of strong emotional bonds between parents and children. But if one looks at them more closely, it becomes apparent that while parents continued to love their children as they always had, this love was complicated in the early modern period by a less sanguine view of human nature in general and children in particular. This, in turn, led to an increasing emphasis on the necessity of disciplining and training children, tainted as they were by original sin. Parents did not love their children less, but they became more focused on them and more anxious about them precisely because of the deep love they had for them. According to the experts, parental love was decidedly dangerous because it could lead parents to condone their children's faults and by doing this set them on the road to perdition. Although he described parental love as "natural," as we have seen, John Robinson advised parents to moderate their affection, and, if they could not do that, to at the very least conceal it: "And if so be they cannot, or will not command their inordinate affections, as they should, yet it is wisdom to conceal them from their children, whom else they may hurt so many ways; as the ape is said, many times to kill her young ones by too strait embracing them."⁶ According to Locke, the immoderate love of parents harms children because it encourages the depraved will with which they are born:

Parents being wisely ordained to love their children are very apt, if reason watch not that natural affection very warily: are apt, I say, to let it run into fondness. They love their little ones, and it is their duty: but they too often with them cherish their faults too. They must not be crossed, forsooth; they must be permitted to have their will in all things; and they being in their infancies not capable of great vices their parents think they may safely enough indulge their little irregularities, and make themselves sport with the pretty perverseness, which they think well enough becomes that innocent age. But to a fond parent, that would not have his child corrected for a perverse trick, but excused it, saying it was a small matter; Solon very well replied, "Aye, but custom is a great one."⁷

⁵ Alan Macfarlane, ed., *The Diary of Ralph Josselin* (London: The Oxford University Press, 1976), 203.

⁶ Philip J. Greven, *Child-Rearing Concepts* 17.

⁷ Philip J. Greven, *Child-Rearing Concepts* 20.

Locke was convinced that if children do not learn from an early age to deny their appetites, they will inevitably indulge them when grown up: "for if the child must have grapes, or sugar-plums, when he has a mind to them, rather than to make the poor baby cry, or be out of humour; why, when he is grown up, must he not be satisfied too, if his desires carry him to wine and women?"⁸

Robinson, Locke, and Josselin were all raised as Calvinists, and their advice on the education of children was deeply colored by Calvin's deep pessimism about the human race. Calvin's doctrine of the utter depravity of fallen human nature led him to champion the state and family as bulwarks against chaos. As Michael Walzer says, "the permanent, inescapable estrangement of man from God is the starting point of Calvin's politics." For Calvin, fearfulness, anxiety, distrust, and war characterized the human condition—which was, indeed, the case in war-torn, early modern Europe—and the only solution was the rigid enforcement of authority predicated on repression and obedience.⁹ Calvin transformed the institution of fatherhood into a religious office, stressing patriarchal authority over affection.¹⁰

While not all Calvinists took such an extreme view of human depravity and the consequent need for patriarchal authority, the group described by Philip Greven as "Evangelical Protestants" certainly did.¹¹ "Depraved," "corrupt," "sinful," and "filthy" are words that continually reappear in evangelical discussions of human nature. According to Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), sinful men

are totally corrupt. . . and in all their dispositions and affections, their heads, their hearts, are totally depraved, all the members of their bodies are only instruments of sin; and all their sense, seeing, hearing, tasting, etc., are only inlets and outlets of sin, channels of corruption.¹²

⁸ Philip J. Greven, *Child-Rearing Concepts*, 21.

⁹ Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), 28ff.

¹⁰ Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints*, 49: "... Calvin radically deemphasized the natural and affective aspects of fatherhood, and dramatically stressed its authoritarian features."

¹¹ Greven points out that whereas Perry Miller rejected the idea that most Puritans believed in the absolute sovereignty of God and the utter impotency of human beings to contribute to their own salvation, later scholars stressed the different strands of Puritan teaching on conversion and salvation. While "preparationists" and "intellectualists" stressed the role of the individual in attaining salvation, the "predestinarians" and "voluntarists" considered it strictly as a divine gift. Evangelical Protestants were "predestinarians." Philip J. Greven, *The Protestant Temperament. Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience and the Self in Early America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 9.

¹² Philip J. Greven, *The Protestant Temperament*, 66.

Cotton Mather lamented his condition: "I have certainly been one of the filthiest creatures upon Earth."¹³ The itinerant preacher Daniel Rogers took self-loathing to even greater heights: "The Lord was pleased to give me a farther sense of the hateful Nature of sin from a view of the working of It in my own Heart. So that I did sensibly loath and abhor It as the vilest filthiest Thing in all the world—I hate It with a perfect Hatred—It is nauseous."¹⁴ John Wesley made it clear that the stain of sin tintured even the youngest infant:

'... in Adam all died,' all human-kind, all the children of men who were then in Adam's loins. The natural consequence of this is, that every one descended from him, comes into the world spiritually dead, dead to God, wholly dead in sin; entirely void of the life of God, void of the image of God, of all that righteousness and holiness, wherein Adam was created. Instead of this, every man born into the world, now bears the image of the devil, in pride and self-will; the image of the beast, in sensual appetites and desires.¹⁵

The unspeakable wickedness of children provided the subject of a sermon delivered by Benjamin Wadsworth:

Their Hearts naturally, are a meer nest, root, fountain of sin and wickedness; and *evil Treasure* from whence proceed *evil things*, viz. *Evil thoughts, Murders, Adulteries*, etc. Indeed, as sharers in the guilt of Adam's first Sin, they're *Children of Wrath by Nature*, liable to Eternal Vengeance, the unquenchable Flames of Hell. But besides this, their Hearts (as hath been said) are unspeakably wicked, estrang'd from God, enmity against Him, eagerly set in pursuing vanities, on provoking God by actual Personal transgressions, whereby they merit and deserve *greater measures* of wrath.¹⁶

John Robinson considered children "a blessing great, but dangerous" precisely because of the corruption they are born with: "... how great and many are their spiritual dangers, both for nourishing and increasing the corruption which they bring into the world with them. ..."¹⁷ For Locke the love of domination "is the first original of most vicious habits, that are ordinary and natural [in children]."¹⁸ Ralph Josselin's young daughter Mary was so exceptional in his view because she was "free from [*the rudeness* of] little children."¹⁹ Josselin knew from his own experience how perverse children are: "... oh the strange prodigious unclean lusts when I was yet a child. How often have [I] walkt with delight to meditate upon

¹³ Philip J. Greven, *The Protestant Temperament*, 67.

¹⁴ Philip J. Greven, *The Protestant Temperament*, 69.

¹⁵ Philip J. Greven, *The Protestant Temperament*, 64.

¹⁶ Cited in Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in 17th Century New England* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 93.

¹⁷ Greven, *Child-Rearing Concepts*, 11–12.

¹⁸ Greven, *Child-Rearing Concepts*, 36.

¹⁹ Josselin, *Diary*, 203.

such courses being too well acquainted with those sens[ations] by bookes which I had. . . . and for this I desire to loathe and abhorre myself."²⁰

The obsession with children that some scholars have noted, particularly in Holland, was therefore not simply an indication of fondness, but equally much a sign of parental fear and concern that their fondness could contribute to their children's damnation.²¹ Anne Bradstreet expresses the anxiety parents felt for newborns:

Stained from birth with Adams sinfull fact,
Thence I began to sin as soon as act:
A perverse will, a love to what's forbid,
A serpents sting in pleasing face lay hid.²²

Jonathan Edwards criticizes parents who accuse evangelical preachers of frightening "poor innocent children with talk of hell fire and eternal damnation." As he says, because children are "young vipers" and far from innocent, they need to be frightened:

As innocent as children seem to be to us, yet if they are out of Christ, they are not so in God's sight. But are young vipers, and are infinitely more hateful than vipers, and are in a most miserable condition, as well as grown persons; and they are naturally very senseless and stupid. . . . and need much to awaken them. Why should we conceal the truth from them?²³

The whole weight of evangelical parental discipline was directed at breaking the child's will: "Break their will that you may save their souls," counseled John Wesley.²⁴ He had learned this lesson from his mother, Susanna Wesley. In a letter she wrote at his request describing her method of rearing him and his siblings, she says, "In order to form the minds of children, the first thing to be done is to conquer their will and bring them to an obedient temper."²⁵ John Robinson contended that the "stubbornness, and stoutness of mind" in children that was the "fruit of natural corruption and root of actual rebellion" had to be "broken," "beaten down," and "destroyed." He maintained that "children should not know, if it could be kept from them, that they have a will of their own."²⁶ Locke repeatedly returns to the subject of breaking a child's will in *Some Thoughts*

²⁰ Josselin, *Diary*, 2.

²¹ Angela Vanhaelen, *Comic Print and Theatre in Early Modern Amsterdam: Gender, Childhood and the City* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 7–8.

²² Cited in Greven, *The Protestant Temperament*, 151.

²³ Jonathan Edwards, *The Great Awakening*, ed. C. C. Goen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 394.

²⁴ Greven, *The Protestant Temperament*, 35.

²⁵ Greven, *Child-Rearing Concepts*, 47–8.

²⁶ Greven, *Child-Rearing Concepts*, 13.

Concerning Education (1693). As he says, virtuous behavior is predicated on the triumph of reason over will and desire:

It seems plain to me, that the principle of all virtue and excellency lies in a power of denying ourselves the satisfaction of our own desires, where reason does not authorize them. This power is to be got and improved by custom, made easy and familiar by an early practice. If therefore I might be heard, I would advise, that, contrary to the ordinary way, children should be used to submit to their desires, and go without their longings, even from their very cradles. The very first thing they should learn to know, should be, that they were not to have any thing, because it pleased them, but because it was thought fit for them. If things suitable to their wants were supplied to them, so that they were never suffered to have what they once cried for, they would learn to be content without it; would never with bawling and peevishness contend for mastery; nor be half so uneasy to themselves and others as they are, because from the first beginning they are not thus handled. If they were never suffered to obtain their desire by the impatience they expressed for it, they would no more cry for other things, than they do for the moon.²⁷

Greven gives numerous examples to show that evangelical parents saw themselves as engaged in "war" with their children; "the imagery of their warfare is the language of conflict, of conquest, of breaking, crushing, subduing, and destroying; the language of power unchecked and of resistance quelled."²⁸ The same accent on the household as the battle ground for the production of devout souls and good citizens appears in Holland as well, as Simon Schama points out:

When properly established and run, the family household was the saving grace of Dutch culture. . . . It was the crucible through which rude matter and beastly appetite could be transubstantiated into redeeming wholesomeness. When food, lust, sloth, indolence, and vain luxury were subdued by the domestic virtues—sobriety, frugality, piety, humility, aptitude and loyalty—they were deprived of their dirt, which is to say, their capacity for inflicting harm or jeopardizing the soul. Home was that morally purified and carefully patrolled terrain where license was governed by prudence and the wayward habits of animals, children and footloose unmarried women were subdued into a state of harmony and grace.²⁹

Instead of relying primarily on the rod to inculcate virtue, however, evangelical parents employed new and more subtle techniques involving shame and guilt to

²⁷ Greven, *Child-Rearing Concepts*, 24–25.

²⁸ Greven, *Child-Rearing Concepts*, 37.

²⁹ Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 388.

modify and correct their children's behavior.³⁰ Cotton Mather explains the psychological strategy he used to break his children's will:

I first beget in them an high opinion of their Father's Love to them, and of his being best able to judge, what shall be good for them.

Then I make them sensible, tis a folly for them to pretend unto any Witt and Will of their own; they must resign all to me, who will be sure to do what is best; my word must be their Law.

I cause them to understand, that it is hurtful and a shameful thing to do amiss. I aggravate this, on all Occasions; and let them see how amiable they will render themselves by well doing.

The *first Chastisement*, which I inflict for an ordinary Fault, is, to lett the Child see and hear me in an Astonishment, and hardly able to believe that the Child could do so *base* a thing, but believing that they will never do it again.

I would never come, to give a child a *Blow*; except in Case of *Obstinacy*; or some gross Enormity.

To be chastised for a while out of my Presence, I would make to be look'd upon, as the sorest Punishment in the Family.³¹

Locke considers this psychological approach far more effective than physical punishment:

... children (earlier perhaps than we think) are very sensible of praise and commendation. They find a pleasure in being esteemed and valued, especially by their parents, and those whom they depend on. If therefore the father caress and commend them, when they do well; show a cold and neglectful countenance to them upon doing ill; and this accompanied by a like carriage of the mother, and all others that are about them; it will in a little time make them sensible of the difference: and this, if constantly observed, I doubt not but will of itself work more than threats or blows, which lose their force, when once grown common, and are of no use when shame does not attend them: and therefore are to be forborn, and never to be used, but in. . . extremity.³²

When neither shame nor guilt sufficed, Mather used the fear of Heaven and Hell to keep his children in line: "Heaven and Hell, I sett before them, as the Consequences of their Behaviour here."³³ In a memorable scene of emotional blackmail, he played on both his eight-year-old daughter's love for him and her fear of damnation to ensure her submission and obedience:

³⁰ Michel Foucault describes the shift from physical approaches to discipline to more subtle manipulations of body and soul in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977); Norbert Elias discusses the changing "threshold of shame and repugnance" in *Power and Civility*, trans. E. Jephcott (New York: Pantheon, 1982), 292.

³¹ Greven, *Child-Rearing Concepts*, 44.

³² Greven, *Child-Rearing Concepts*, 33–34.

³³ Greven, *Child-Rearing Concepts*, 45.

I took my little daughter, Katy, into my Study; and there I told my child, that I am to *dy* shortly, and shee must, when I am *Dead*, Remember every Thing that I said unto her.

I sett before her, the sinful and woful condition of her *Nature*, and I charg'd her, to *pray in secret Places*, every Day, without ceasing, that God for the Sake of Jesus Christ would give her a New Heart, and *pardon Her Sins*, and make her a Servant of His.³⁴

According to Locke "fear and awe" were the twin pillars upon which respect for parents and the obedience of children must be built: "Thus much for the settling your authority over children in general. Fear and awe ought to give you the first power over their minds, and love and friendship in riper years to hold it."³⁵ Susanna Wesley gave similar advice: "And when the will of the child is totally subdued, and it is brought to revere and stand in awe of the parents, then a great many childish follies and inadvertencies may be passed by."³⁶ For evangelical Christians, disciplining children to the point that they were totally submissive and obedient to their parents was the necessary first step in insuring their total submission and obedience to God, and, this, in turn, was an essential step in their ultimate salvation. Discipline was therefore literally a matter of life or death not just in this world but for all eternity. In her letter to her son, Susanna Wesley reveals the depth of her concern for her children.

By modern standards she was an exacting, perhaps even zealous, disciplinarian, but there was nothing punitive or vindictive about her actions. On the contrary, she was motivated by her deep love for her offspring. When she punished them, she was responding to the theological premises of her evangelical faith, which demanded the complete abnegation of self will and the utter subservience of the individual to God. Since this was the prerequisite for salvation, her God-given duty as a parent entailed doing everything in her power to prepare her children for a life of selfless devotion to God. Motherhood had catapulted her into an ongoing battle between God and the devil, in which her children were pitiable pawns in dire need of her guidance and supervision until they were old enough to join the battle on their own:

As self-will is the root of all sin and misery, so whatever cherishes this in children insures their after wretchedness and irreligion: whatever checks and mortifies it, promotes their future happiness and piety. This is still more evident if we further consider that religion is nothing else than doing the will of God and not our own: that the one grand impediment to our temporal and eternal happiness being this self-will, no indulgence of it can be trivial, no denial unprofitable. Heaven or hell depends on this alone; so that the parent who studies to subdue it, in his child works together with God in the renewing and saving a

³⁴ *Diary of Cotton Mather*, 2 vols. (New York: F. Ungar Publishing Company, 1957), 2: 239–40.

³⁵ Greven, *Childhood-Rearing Concepts*, 27.

³⁶ Greven, *Child-Rearing Concepts*, 48.

soul. The parent who indulges it does the Devil's work: makes religion impracticable, salvation unattainable, and does all that in him lies to damn his child body and soul forever.³⁷

Protestants were not alone in turning to psychology to discipline their children. Elizabeth Marvick documents a similar "new style" of child-rearing among French Catholics. Educators like Jacqueline Pascal, headmistress of the school for girls at Port Royal, sought to replace the fear of external retribution with internally generated guilt. "One can," she counsels, "make the little and middle ones placards which describe their fault in large letters—one or two words is enough, such as "lazy," "negligent," or "liar." Or one could impose humiliating penitences "as one does on the younger ones, such as to make them go without a veil or ask prayers of the sisters in the refectory."³⁸

The emphasis on psychological techniques to discipline children did not mean, however, that corporeal punishment was never employed. In *The Christian mans closet* (1581), Barthelemy Batt explains how the wisdom and providence of God has specially formed buttocks so they can receive blows without incurring serious injury! We have seen that John Locke allowed corporeal punishment in extreme cases, but even then he suggested it was more appropriate for younger than older children: "all that I have hitherto contended for, is, that whatsoever rigour is necessary, it is more to be used, the younger children are; and, having by a due application wrought its effect, it is to be relaxed, and changed into a milder sort of government."³⁹

Susanna Wesley found that fear of the rod especially effective on young children: "when turned a year old (and some before) they were taught to fear the rod and to cry softly, by which means they escaped abundance of correction which they might otherwise have had."⁴⁰ In his book provocatively entitled *Spare the Child* (not the rod!), Philip Greven demonstrates how deeply embedded notions of physical punishment are in Christian theology, particularly in evangelical and apocalyptic thought. The God of the Old Testament is "jealous;" he does not hesitate to kill and destroy those who disobey his commands. Greven contends that "patterns of punishment correspond closely to people's conceptions of God."⁴¹ It is therefore not surprising that in Deuteronomy (21:18–21) parents are told to

³⁷ Greven, *Child-Rearing Concepts*, 48–49.

³⁸ Elizabeth W. Marvick, "Nature vs. Nurture: Patterns and Trends in Seventeenth Century French Child-Rearing," *The History of Childhood*, ed. Lloyd deMause (New York: The Psychohistory Press, 1974), 277–78.

³⁹ Greven, *Child-Rearing Concepts*, 28.

⁴⁰ Greven, *Child-Rearing Concepts*, 46–47.

⁴¹ Greven, *Spare the Child: The Religious Roots of Punishment and the Psychological Impact of Physical Abuse* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 13.

bring disobedient sons to the Elders so that they can be stoned to death. Christians, especially Protestant evangelical Christians, were deeply influenced by the Old Testament view of God. The punishment and suffering of Jesus for the sins of mankind together with the vivid and gruesome depictions of hell in Christian art underline the intimate connection between punishment and salvation in Christian theology. If corporeal punishment was the only way to save souls, it was a small price to pay.

This was the logic that lay behind the punishments imposed on sinners and heretics by the Catholic Church and the Catholic Inquisition. But where the Catholics had confession and absolution, saints and the Virgin Mary, and, in the last resort, purgatory to meliorate their sins, Protestants did not. Life on earth was therefore the only place and the only time Protestants had to ingratiate themselves with God. For conscientious evangelical parents, the stakes were inordinately high. Any dereliction of their duties as disciplinarians could result in the eternal damnation of their offspring.

Only by factoring in the more pessimistic view of human nature and the nature of children generated by the Reformation can we fully understand the new psychological direction parental discipline took in the early modern period. But the treatises I cited at the beginning of this essay make it clear that while parents, physicians, and educators were concerned with the spiritual lives of their charges, they were attuned to their emotional and physical needs as well. Take, for example, Luther's remarks on discipline in *Duties of Parents in Training Children* (1519). Here Luther cautions parents about the ill effects that too much discipline, especially physical discipline, can have on children:

The first and foremost care that he [St Paul, Ephesians 6:1] here enjoins upon parents with reference to their children. . . is, that they provoke them not to wrath and discouragement. This is a rebuke to such as display a violent and impetuous temper in the management of their children. For, under such an evil discipline, their disposition, while yet tender and impressible, becomes permanently clouded with fear and diffidence; and so their grows up in their breast a hatred toward their parents, in so far that they run away from them and pursue a course that otherwise they never would have entered upon. And, in truth, what hope is there of a child, who exercises hatred and mistrust toward his parents, and is ever downcast in their presence? Nevertheless St. Paul in this passage does not intend to forbid parents altogether from being angry with their children and chastening them; but rather, that they punish them in love, when punishment is necessary; not, as some do, in a passionate spirit, and without bestowing a thought upon their improvement.⁴²

⁴² *Duties of Parents in Training Children* (1519), cited in Frederick Eby, *Early Protestant Educators: the Educational Writings of Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Other Leaders of Protestant Thought* (1931; New York: AMS Press, 1971), 22–23.

As we have seen, a major premise behind the psychological manipulation of children was the desire to get them to *want* to do what they *had* to do, not so much by beating but by playing on their desire to please. As Locke said, children “find a pleasure in being esteemed and valued, especially by their parents, and those whom they depend on.”⁴³ But as I said at the beginning of this essay, this kind of enlightened view applied to boys far more than to girls. Locke wrote his treatise on education specifically for “the sons of gentlemen.” Luther’s remarks, cited above, were directed exclusively to boys, as he makes clear in the following sentence: “where such a spirit of fear obtains the mastery over a man in his childhood, he will hardly be able to rid himself of it to the end of his days.”⁴⁴ Concern for the deleterious effects of over-zealous discipline did not pertain to girls. For girls, corporeal punishment and the fear it instills might very well be necessary to protect them against their own dangerous tendencies, namely their lascivious natures, which must be repressed if they are to retain their only marketable virtue, their chastity. This point is made by the Saxon Pastor Andreas Hohndorf:

Teach your daughter with a smiling mouth but when necessary with a hard hand. Those are the right locks to lock in chastity and lock out unchastity. . . . But only with the grace of God. Without his help, lust will be so great that parents, brothers, even husbands cannot do anything about it. This has to be prevented with proper upbringing and care.⁴⁵

“Lock” is the operative word here. So anxious were parents to protect the chastity of their female offspring that they turned their “houses into fortresses, girls into recluses, and fathers into worriers and warriors.”⁴⁶ Underlying this parental anxiety was the belief that girls were more subject to temptations of the flesh and less willing to listen to reason than their male counterparts. Simon Schama describes the ambiguity of the genre paintings of young women in Dutch art, where “mirrors are gazed into, letters dreamily perused, fruit tantalizingly beckons, music seduces, and *roemers* beg to be filled to the brim. Flirtation,

⁴³ Greven, *Child-Rearing Concepts*, 33.

⁴⁴ Luther, *Duties of Parents in Training Children* (1519), 23. As Susan Karant-Nunn and Merry Wiesner-Hanks point out, Luther accepted the view of the majority of his male contemporaries that girls could not master higher learning, but they should have some schooling appropriate to their future roles as wives and mothers (*Luther on Women: A Sourcebook* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003], 10).

⁴⁵ Andreas Hohndorf, *Der Eltern- und Kinder Spiegel* (Leipzig, 1768). Cited in Cornelia Niekus Moore, *The Maiden's Mirror: Reading Material for German Girls in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Wolfenbütteler Forschungen, 36 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1987), 18.

⁴⁶ Moore, *The Maiden's Mirror*, 22. Cf. Ann R. Jones, “Nets and Bridles: Early Modern Conduct Books and Sixteenth-Century Women’s Lyrics,” *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays in Literature and the History of Sexuality*, ed. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse (New York: Methuen, 1987).

innuendo, suggestion and ambiguity abound, and the hard light of moral guidance is refracted through intervening opportunities."⁴⁷ Adolescent girls lived in a kind of no-man's land, awaiting a husband. According to the moralist Jacob Cats, a nubile young woman was like a chestnut on the fire, ready to explode if not cooled down, and marriage was seen as the cooling water that extinguished burning lust.⁴⁸ This ideology, which encouraged parents to sequester girls at home, was apparently very successful. One of the female characters in Sigmund von Birken's "The Excellence of Women" (1669) complained that for women home is a virtual prison:

Like inmates in a penal institution, we are taught handiwork, needlework, and spinning. We are banished to the kitchen and household chores, forced to become Marthas rather than Marys. How can we become virtuous when we are prevented from reading virtuous books? . . . And how are we supposed to talk intelligently, when we are forbidden to learn?⁴⁹

By sequestering girls at home, parents and educators hoped to do everything in their power to discourage female curiosity. While curiosity was encouraged in boys, it was an anathema for girls. Even Jan Amos Comenius, noted for his progressive views on education, made it clear that women should not be educated because they are curious, but only to learn virtue and modesty:

Women should not be admitted to education because of curiosity, but because of virtue and modesty, especially in the areas for which it would be beneficial if they advance in knowledge and ability, namely the household, the concern for their own salvation, that of their husbands, children, and family members.⁵⁰

In fact, female curiosity was a topic of great concern to males, who saw women as so many Pandoras, Psyches, Lot's wives, and Eves, whose snooping, particularly into sexual matters, was categorically condemned.⁵¹ In a period characterized by religious upheaval and profound social, economic, and cultural changes, curiosity was gendered female and seen as a threat to established male authority. The very real fear that things were changing and getting out of place was depicted in terms

⁴⁷ Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches* 433.

⁴⁸ Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches* 436.

⁴⁹ Sigmund von Birken, "Fürtrefflichkeit des lieblöblichen Frauenzimmers," printed in von Birken, *Pegnesis, Zweyter Theyl* (Nürnberg, Wolf Eberhard Felsecker, 1679). Cited in Moore, *The Maiden's Mirror*, 28.

⁵⁰ *Grosse Didaktik* (1627–1632), cited in Moore, *The Maiden's Mirror*, 29–30.

⁵¹ Barbara M. Benedict, *Curiosity: A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 116: "Impertinent curiosity, particularly sexual snooping, is an impulse traditionally attributed to women. From Pandora's peeking and Eve's eating, to Alice's anxiety in Wonderland, female curiosity in religion, myth, popular culture, and high literature has meant a perverse desire to spy things out, particularly to know what makes men, men."

of gender reversal. In a satirical broadside entitled "A Character of a Turn-Coat: Or, the True Picture of an English Monster (1707) the figures of a man and woman reverse roles when the sheet is turned upside down, a clear indication that the world is topsy-turvy. The message is explained in a bit of doggerel:

For as the Times do change, they'll changed their Face
Foreswear their Sex, their Age, their Name, and Race.
As by these Pictures you may plainly see,
He that was Man, a Woman seems to be.
And she that did a Woman represent,
By change into another form is sent.⁵²

In Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (1611) "Curiosità" is depicted as a huge, winged woman with wild hair, who gazes straight ahead with out-flung arms as if to embrace the world. The emblem states that "curiosity is an unbridled desire of those that seek to know more than they should." The figure's red and blue dress is decorated with ears, signifying gossip, and frogs. According to Barbara Benedict, frogs stand for human energy, while red and blue stand for the body and the sky, which in turn symbolize carnal and intellectual knowledge. Female curiosity and the female gaze become potent themes in early modern literature, both reinforcing the idea of the sexual insatiability of women.⁵³ No decent women raised her eyes in public, and gazing was out of the question. Johann Baptist Fickler castigates "nosey" ("fürwitzig") mothers who stimulate the curiosity of their impressionable young daughters with titillating love stories:

A beautiful daughter, raised so tenderly, watched so carefully, and provided with such beautiful books will, upon marriage, treat her husband as she has learned, his children as she see fit, and the daughters will be like their mothers. But a daughter who has been raised with love stories will be plagued by curiosity and will want to try out what she has read, and if it pleases her, she will want to try again. It will occupy her thoughts continually, and her daughters will be like their mother.⁵⁴

Only by severely limiting female intellectual horizons to those activities essential for a wife and mother could female chastity be preserved. Cornelia Moore contends that early modern Germany witnessed a step backward for girls, not only

⁵² The theme of inversion is treated in Natalie Z. Davis, "Women on Top," eadem, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), ch. 5; *The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society*, ed. Barbara Babcock (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978); Peter Stallybrass, "The World Turned Upside Down: Inversion, Gender and the State," *The Matter of Difference: Materialist Feminine Criticism of Shakespeare*, ed. V. Wayne (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 201–17.

⁵³ Benedict, *Curiosity*, 85, 128.

⁵⁴ *Tractat Herrn Gabriel Putherbeien von Thuron/ Von Verbot unnd Auffhebung deren Bücher und Schriften*. . . (1581), cited in Moore, *The Maiden's Mirror*, 26.

in terms of literacy but also in terms of the amount and kinds of learning deemed appropriate for them.⁵⁵ A similar restriction on the education of girls occurred in England.⁵⁶ Mrs. Wolley, who wrote *The Gentlewoman's Companion* (1675) complains about the limitations placed on female intellectual development. As she says, "Most in this depraved age think a woman learned enough if she can distinguish her husband's bed from another's."⁵⁷

While intellectual activity was curtailed, constant activity in the form of sewing and spinning was deemed necessary to occupy idle female hands, lest they get up to unspeakable things:

From an early age on, a girl should be made to work, so she does not become soft but a little hard. . . . As long as things are young, they can be bent and pulled. Don't give your daughter an abundance of food, drink and trinkets. . . . Give her needle and thread, distaff and spindle, and other tools to make her soft hands a little harder.⁵⁸

According to Hans Michael Moscherosch, "A prayer book and a spindle are the appropriate attributes of a maiden."⁵⁹ For Catholic and Protestant authorities alike, female chastity could only be assured if women were barred from studying and learning anything that might encourage them to think independently. In his *De institutione Foeminae Christianae* (1524), Juan Luis Vives makes this point repeatedly:

For as for a man nedeth many thynges, as wysedome, eloquence, knowledge of thynges, with remembrance, some craftes to lyve by, Justice, Liberality, lusty stomake, and other thynges so, that were to longe to reherce: And though some of these do lacke, hit is nat to be disliked, so that many of them be had: but in a woman no man wyl loke for eloquence, great witt, or prudence, or craftes to lyve by, or ordering of the commen weale, or justice, or liberalite: Finally no man wyl loke for any other thing of a woman, but her honestye: the which only, if hit be lacked, is lyke as in a man, if he lacke al that he shuld have. For in a woman the honestie is in stede of all.⁶⁰

Vives is even worse than Aristotle, who at least allowed women a modicum of virtue and justice. His insistent reiteration of the need to preserve female chastity against the insuperable odds of female nature reveals Vives's ingrained pessimism about the possibility that most "maydes" can retain their modesty and chastity.

⁵⁵ Moore, *The Maiden's Mirror*, 27.

⁵⁶ Dorothy Gardiner, *English Girlhood at School: A Study of Education through Twelve Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929), 235; Myra Reynolds, *The Learned Lady in England, 1650–1760* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1920), 27–45.

⁵⁷ Cited in Stone, *Family, Sex, and Marriage*, 344.

⁵⁸ Moore, *The Maiden's Mirror*, 21.

⁵⁹ Moscherosch, *Insomnis Cura Parentum* (1643), 126, cited in Moore, *The Maiden's Mirror*, 27.

⁶⁰ Juan Luis Vives, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, ed. Virginia Walcott Beauchamp, Elizabeth H. Hageman, et al. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), xlix.

Vives is appalled by the idea that young women should even think about marriage, particularly its sexual aspect, and he is utterly repelled by young women who indicate that they want to be married and proceed to the marriage bed with no sign of reluctance:

. . . More over it is nat comely for a mayde to desire marriage, and moch lesse to shewe her selfe, to longe therefore. It was a custome in old tyme amonge the Romanyns, while that chaste worlde lasted, whiche was the example of honestie, that whan a mayde was fyrste married, and brought unto her husbandes house, she shulde nat go in at his dore her selfe, but be taken up and be caryed in by other: as a token, that she came nat thether with her good wyll, where she shulde lose her virginite.⁶¹

The real choice for women in Vives's imagination is virginity or lust; no middle ground appears to exist even for married women. In this respect, he contrasts bad women with good men, and implies that in their lasciviousness women are like wolves, out to pervert and destroy virtuous males:

And in tymne passed, I thought it had bene but a fable, that men tell, howe Pasyphae. . . dyd lye with a bulle: and other as ungratious dedes as that: whiche I have harde say, other women have done: but nowe me thynketh them all likely inough to be true, when I se women can fynde in theyr hartes, to tomble and lye with vicious and filthy men, and dronkerdes, and braulers, and dawyshe, and brayneles, cruell and murderers. For what difference is between them and asses, swine, bores, bulles, or beares? What madness is it to have delyte in such men, and to flee and eschewe wyse men. . . . Wherefore it was well and aptlye spoken, that a cuntrye man of myne sayd, that the nature of women was in chosynge men, lyke unto the female wolves: Whiche amonge a great sorte of males, take the fouleste and worste favored: but men never caste any favoure to a woman, but for some good propertie, either of substance, person, or witte. And women many tymes love some men, bycause there is nothyng in them worthy to be beloved. Whereby they declare the more plainly, that they go without reason, whiche thing I say by some, that have nothyng a do with theyr reason, but all given and applied unto theyr body: Agynst whom I have spoken sharpely, because they dote, and fonde good yonge men, and bryng them to fylthynes and foly, whan they wolde fayne please the women, and se they can nat, excepte they go wyde from all conditions perteynyng unto men. . . .⁶²

The contrast between good men and bad, bad women appears throughout Vives's work. He was convinced that females are for the most part incapable of retaining their virginity, that without any prompting from virtuous males, they willingly sacrifice it for lust: "Hit is an evyll keeper, that can nat kepe one thing [chastity] well, committed to her kepyng, and put in trust to her with moche

⁶¹ Juan Luis Vives, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, Bk 1, xvi, 76.

⁶² Juan Luis Vives, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, 77–78.

commendacion of wordes: and specially whiche no man wyl take from her ageynst her wyll, nor touche hit, excepte she be wyllinge her self."⁶³

Vives's pessimistic view of the moral character of females is the primary reason why he, like so many other male authorities, is so concerned with circumscribing what females should learn and read. Only a very small section of his work is devoted to the intellectual development of girls. This section, "What bokes be to be redde, and what nat," takes up a mere four pages of a book of some 163 pages. Like so many males before and after him, Vives instinctively draws a connection between reading and chastity, or what he describes as "pureness bothe of body and mynde" (28). This explains why the section immediately following is entitled "Of virginite." Top of the list of what women must not read because they encourage lascivious thoughts and unchaste deeds are chivalric romances, "bokes writen in our mothers tonges, that be made but for idel men and women to rede, have none other matter, but of warre and love."⁶⁴

Vives objects to romances because they "be so playne and folysse lyes" (25), with one man alone killing twenty and another left for dead with a hundred wounds, who rises up whole and strong the following day to defeat two giants and escapes loaded with gold, silver, and precious stones (25). Such manifestly false stories can only encourage idle thoughts, the worst of which is lust, and vain imaginings: "What a madness is hit of folks, to have pleasure in these bokes? Also there is no wytte in them, but a fewe wordes of wanten luste" (25).⁶⁵ Vives's instructs girls and young women to beware of all these books "likewise as of serpents or snakes," a presumably unconscious phallic reference in itself! The only

⁶³ Juan Luis Vives, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, Bk 1. vii, 33. Vives gives truly horrific historical examples of fathers and kinsfolk killing daughters who have lost their virginity. A particularly gruesome one concerns "Hippomenes a great man of Athenes, whan he knewe his doughter defoyled of one, he shutte her up in a stable with a wylde horse, kepte meateles: so the horse, when he had suffred great hounger longe, and because he was of nature fierse, he waxed mad, and al to tare the yonge women to fede hum selfe with" (33).

⁶⁴ Among the list of "ungracious bokes," Vives says are "such as be in my counter in Spayn Amadise, Florisande, Tirante, Tristain, and Celestina the baude mother of noughtynes. In France Lancilotdu Lake, Pars and Vienna, Ponthus and Sidonia, and Melucyne. In Flanders, Flori and Whit flowre, Leonel and Canamour, Curias and Floret, Pyramus and Thysbe. In Englande, Parthenope, Genarides, Hippomadon, William and Melyour, Libius and Arthur, Guye, Bevis, and many other. And some translated out of latine in to vulgare speches, as the unsavory conceytes of Pogius, and of Aeneas Silvius, Eurialus and Lucretia: whiche bokes but idell menne wrote unlerned, and sette all upon fylthe and vitiousness: in whom I wounder what shulde delite men but that vicepleaseth them so moche. . . ." (Bk. v, 25).

⁶⁵ Vives was hardly the first to discuss the dangers of reading romances. In Canto 5 of the *Divine Comedy*, Dante describes the dire effect that such reading had on Paolo and Francesca: reading led to kissing, and that led them both to Hell. But what is new in the early modern period is that the danger inherent in reading romances, as well as many other kinds of literature, is applied almost exclusively to the female sex.

story that Vives predictably likes is the repellantly masochist story of Griselda. In the case of those females who insist on reading unsuitable romances, Vives, like his Saxon counterpart Andreas Hohndorf, advises the use of force: "her father and frendes shuld provide that she maye be kepte from all redynge. And so by disuse, forgette learnynge, if hit can be done. For hit is better to lacke a good thing than to use hit yll" (27).

Whether Protestant or Catholic, expert opinion on the hazards of reading novels and romances is entirely uniform. Aegidius Albertinus claims that novels and romances will simply "awaken evil thought and enflame and light up the tender and weak hearts of girls."⁶⁶ Cornelius Agrippa is equally convinced that reading romances will set girls on the road to perdition:

This is the way it goes with these courtly maidens, who are from their earliest youth brought up in leisure, conversations and dancing and trained in evil disciplines culled from these courtly novels with stories that tell of nothing else but lust, prostitution, adultery and other shameful things, with comedies, nasty talk, and shameful songs. From this girls suck like piglets from their mother's nipples destructive tendencies, lewdness, frivolity, pride, arrogance, shamelessness, cunning, deception, obstinacy, petulance, revenge, chatter, and nothing but evil lust and desire.⁶⁷

The image of girls as "little piglets" speaks for itself. If reading is problematic for girls, writing is even more so in the minds of the experts. Aegidius Albertinus thinks it inadvisable to teach them to write because they will only use the skill to write love-letters:

As far as writing is concerned, it is not at all advisable that women learn this, since they will then be able to write and answer love-letters. Because, although some women do use their writing skill well, most of them misuse it to such an extent that it would be better to abolish writing all together.⁶⁸

When it comes to what females can and should read, it is no surprise that Vives advises them to read scripture, the writings of Church fathers, and selected classic authors ("Hieronymy, Saynt Cyprian, Augustine, Ambrose, Hilary, Gregory, Plato, Cicero, Senec, and suche" top the list). But he insists that these writers must only be read in the company of "some wyse and sad men." As he says, "Nor the woman ought nat to folowe her owne jugement, lest whan she hath but a light entryng in lernynge, she shuld take false for true, hurtful in stede of holsome, folishe and pevysh for sad and wyse" (27). The same selection of texts appears in Protestant descriptions of the literature suitable for the female sex. Johann

⁶⁶ *Der teutschen Sprache Ehrenkranz* (1644), cited in Moore, *The Maiden's Mirror* 196.

⁶⁷ *De incertitudine et vanitate omnium scientiarum et artium* (1530), cited in Moore, *The Maiden's Mirror*, 194.

⁶⁸ Moore, *The Maiden's Mirror*, 119.

Bugenhagen (1485–1558), who worked with Luther and Melanchthon in determining the kind of education suitable for Lutheran boys and girls, wrote the following description of what the vernacular schools for girls in Brunswick should be like:

Four schools for girls shall be held in four well selected parts of the city, so that the girls are not required to go a great distance from their parents. . . .

. . . such teaching [of girls] involves trouble and labor, although it is accomplished in a short time. For the girls need to learn only to read, and to hear some exposition of the ten commandments, the creed and Lord's prayer, and what baptism is and the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, and to learn to recite some passages from the New Testament concerning the creed, the love and patience on the cross, and some scared history or story suitable to girls, in order to exercise their memories, moreover in order to impress the gospel of Christ, and in addition to learn Christian songs. Such they can learn in a year or at most two years. Therefore let the parents beware that they do not give the schoolmistresses too little for such work even if it takes but a short time to do.

The girls, moreover, shall go to school only one or at most two hours per day. The rest of the time they repeat the lesson at home, and also help their parents and learn to keep house, and to observe, etc.

From such girls who have laid hold of God's work there will come useful, skillful, happy, friendly, obedient, God-fearing, not superstitious, and self-willed housewives, who can control their servants, and train their children in obedience and to respect them and to reverence God. And their children will henceforth train their children in the same way, and so on for each generation. But if any evil should happen at any time, we will leave that to God. We should do what God has commanded us.⁶⁹

Clearly a little female education goes a long way. Moscherosch is especially insistent that "maidens" should "not know much." As he exclaims, "Heaven spare us an experienced maiden!"⁷⁰ This utter disdain for bluestocking women was prevalent among Catholics and Protestants alike. Johann Caspar Eberti did not mince words on this point:

Women who spend time with mathematics, philosophy, the sciences, politics, criticism, philosophy, poetry, languages, higher theology, jurisprudence, and medicine will not be much use to anyone. When you meet one of these creatures, you can admire her like an exotic plant but you do not show her as an example to be imitated. The best sciences are those that teach women how to lead her kitchen, pantry, and household and how to further the happiness of her husband.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Eby, *Early Protestant Educators*, 205.

⁷⁰ Cited in Moore, *The Maiden's Mirror*, 27.

⁷¹ Johann Caspar Eberti, *Eröffnetes Cabinet deß Gelehrten Frauen=Zimmers* (1706), cited in Moore, *The Maiden's Mirror*, 30. Moliere's *Les Femmes Savants* makes the same point. But so do the English playwrights Dryden, Shadwell, Congreve, Farquar, and Gay. The Duchess of Newcastle provides a good example of a woman who was ridiculed for her intellectual pretensions. Lady Mary Wortley

Thomas Parker was utterly disgusted by his sister's temerity in publishing a book. He made this abundantly clear when he said in a letter to her, "yr printing of a Book, beyond the custom of yr. Sex, doth rankly smell."⁷² For those females who did meddle in theology and learning, there were always cautionary tales about the dire effects such meddling would have. John Winthrop, Governor of Massachusetts, knew exactly why the wife of Governor Hopkins of Connecticut had gone insane. As he says:

Her husband, being very loving and tender of her, was loath to grieve her; but he saw his error, when it was too late. For if she had attended her household affairs, and such things as belong to women, not gone out of her way and calling to meddle in such things as are proper for men, whose minds are stronger. . . she had kept her wits, and might have improved them usefully and honorably in the place God had set her.⁷³

During the early modern period male authorities produced a battery of philosophical and biological arguments to prove the physical and intellectual inferiority of the female sex. In 1708, at the dawn of the age of Enlightenment, *The British Apollo* answered a reader's question as to whether females were as capable of learning as males with a definite "no" on the grounds that "they are cast in too soft a mold, are made of too fine, too delicate a composure to endure the severity of study, the drudgery of contemplation, the fatigue of profound speculation."⁷⁴ This was a somewhat kinder and gentler argument than the one put forward by Nicolaus Schmidt a century and a half earlier, namely that females had an inborn mental weakness that made them especially susceptible to the wiles of the Devil: "Satan has an especially easy time with the poor weak female sex. By nature they tend to pride, and their naïve and weak hearts cannot resist temptations."⁷⁵ But whether the cause was female delicacy or female susceptibility to the devil, the upshot was that too much education was wasted on girls, that, in fact, it could be dangerous. As we have seen this way of thinking led many parents to circumscribe the mental and physical activities of their daughters.

Montague advised her daughter to give her granddaughter a scholarly education, but to hide the fact because it would "draw on her the envy, and consequently the most inveterate hatred of all he and she fools, which will certainly be at least three parts in four of all her acquaintances." Cited in Stone, *Family, Sex, and Marriage*, 357. Cf. A.H. Upham, "English Femmes Savantes at the End of the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of English and German Philology* 12 (1913): 262–76; here 264.

⁷² Cited in Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 44.

⁷³ Morgan, *The Puritan Family*, 44.

⁷⁴ Stone, *Family, Sex, and Marriage*, 357.

⁷⁵ *Von den zehen Teufeln oder Lastern / damit die bösen unartigen Weiber besessen sind / Auch von den zehen Tugenden / damit die frommen und vernünftigen Weiber gezieret sind / in Reimweis gestellt durch Nicolaus Schmidt* (1557). Cited in Moore, *The Maiden's Mirror*, 15.

It is notable that in the religious works of literature specifically produced for girls and young women in the early modern period there is no mention of sex. For example, the story of Dinah and Tamar were constantly repeated as cautionary tales for teaching girls and women to stay at home, but why this was so and exactly what happened to either woman was never explained.⁷⁶ This is very different from works written before the sixteenth century, like the book of Geoffrey Chevalier de La Tour Landry, whose advice to his daughters, together with that of his wife, was much franker about sex and every vice, including sexual ones.⁷⁷

The increased anxiety on the part of both Catholics and Protestants about females is one of the predominant themes in the early modern period. Nowhere is this obsession with the dangers of female sexuality and females in general more explicit than in Grobian literature,⁷⁸ which seeks to civilize males by inculcating the idea that boorish, coarse behavior is unmanly and, even more to the point, a sign of effeminacy. The connection of females with the body and matter and males with the soul or spirit goes back to Aristotle and appears as a constant theme in the literature of the Middle Ages,⁷⁹ but in the early modern period this dichotomy was drawn in starker terms than ever before as the genders became increasingly polarized.⁸⁰

Grobian literature obsessively focuses on the materiality of the body, on its uncontrolled orifices as they vomit, excrete, urinate, and exude snot, semen, and

⁷⁶ Moore, *The Maiden's Mirror*, 36

⁷⁷ *Le livre du Chevalier de La Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles*, ed. Anatole de Montaiglon (Paris: P. Jannet, 1854). See Juanita Ruys' discussion of this work in her contribution to the present volume.

⁷⁸ Grobian literature originated with the publication of Friedrich Dedekind's ironic poem, *Grobianus et Grobiana, de morum simplicitate, libri tres* in 1549. This was followed by a German vernacular adaptation, a 1605 English translation, and Thomas Dekker's *Guls Horne-booke*. Cf. Barbara Correll, *The End of Conduct: Grobianus and the Renaissance Text of the Subject* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996)

⁷⁹ Maryanne C. Horowitz, "Aristotle and Women," *Journal of the History of Biology* 9 (1979): 182–213. Eleanor C. McLaughlin, "Equality of Souls, Inequality of Sexes: Women in Medieval Theology," *Religion and Sexism: Images of Woman in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* ed. Rosemary R. Ruether (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 213–66.

⁸⁰ Karen Hausen maintains that this polarization occurred in the eighteenth century ("Die Polarisierung der 'Geschlechtscharaktere' . . .," *Sozial-Geschichte der Familie in der Neuzeit Europas*, ed. Werner Conze [Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1976], 363–93). But an essentialist rhetoric of gender identity emerged two centuries earlier and laid the foundation for the kind of gender "complementarity" that Thomas Laqueur and Londa Schiebinger claim only emerges in the second half of the eighteenth century. Cf. Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990); Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989). Michael Stollberg documents this essentialist rhetoric in "A Woman Down to Her Bones: The Anatomy of Sexual Difference in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries," *Isis* 94 (2003): 274–99.

blood.⁸¹ The object of this literature is to shame its male readers into proper, civilized behavior, which consists in subjugating and sanitizing the delinquent body, which is by definition female.⁸² As Pierre Bourdieu observes, this project of civilizing the body is literally embodied in such things as dress, comportment, and verbal and physical mannerisms. By these means what is essentially a purely social construct of gender identity is made to seem utterly “real” and to reflect the divinely ordained natures of males and females.⁸³ Scholars have pointed out how essentially repulsive Grobian literature is when it comes to sex.

According to Barbara Könneker grobian sex is “dirty,” “unappetizing,” and “fecal/scatological;” while it is disgusting, it is not obscene.⁸⁴ Inasmuch as sex is associated with females, in addition to being dangerous sexual predators, females are equally dirty and unappetizing. Grobian literature was written for men, and even though reference is made to a female Grobiana, she is in an entirely different category. Grobianus is not by nature a boor; he is only a boor because he chooses to succumb to female influence.

Grobiana, however, is what she is because she is female and can be nothing else. As Correll comments “Presumably you can take the Grobiana out of Grobianus and produce the civil subject that is, in fact, the project of the civilizing process. . . but . . . you cannot take the Grobiana out of Grobiana.”⁸⁵ The inevitable conclusion is that in the case of females shame and self-discipline are not enough by themselves to civilize them; they must also be sequestered and excluded from the public realm for their own good but especially for the good of men.⁸⁶ As we have

⁸¹ A palpable disgust for the body is a constant theme among evangelical Protestants. Cotton Mather, for example, thought he was no better than a dog because he urinated: “I was once emptying the Cistern of Nature, and making Water at the wall. At the same Time, there came a Dog, who did so too, before me. Thought I; what mean, and vile Things, are the Children of Men, in this mortal State! How much do our natural Necessities abase us, and place us in the same regard, on the same Level with the very Dogs!” Jonathan Edwards was equally appalled by his body: “The inside of the body of man is full of filthiness, contains his bowels that are full of dung, which represents the corruption and filthiness that the heart of man is naturally full of” (Greven, *The Protestant Temperament*, 67).

⁸² Barbara Correll, *The End of Conduct*, 19–20: “In the sex/gender system of the early modern period, the civil subject must assert supreme identity by containment and erasure of whatever in the cultural semiotic scheme is identified as the feminine—a project remarkable in both its futility and its historical efficacy.”

⁸³ Pierre Bourdieu, “Structures and the Habitus,” *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 72–95.

⁸⁴ See her introduction to Friedrich Dedekind, *Grobianus, de morum simplicitate. Grobianus, von groben Sitten und unhöflichen Gebärden, deutsche Fassung von Caspar Scheidt*, ed. Barbara Könneker (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1979), xv.

⁸⁵ Correll, *The End of Conduct*, 130.

⁸⁶ Frederick Eby, *Early Protestant Educators*, 22–24. “School Ordinance from the Württemberg Church Ordinance, 1559”: “. . . And inasmuch as in some German schools not only the boys, but also the little girls are sent to school, we determine that in such schools the children be separated, the boys alone and the little girls also be separately placed and taught, and that the schoolmaster by no means allow

seen, this was the gist of the advice given by male authors to the unfortunate parents of girls.

As this essay has attempted to argue, the early modern period represents a watershed in parent-child relations. While parents loved their children just as they always had, a new sense of urgency and anxiety colored their relationships with their offspring. The pessimistic view of human nature characteristic of Protestantism led to new psychological techniques of child-rearing advocating an unprecedented degree of mind control. External conformity was no longer sufficient. Through the inculcation of guilt and shame, parents and educators now required children to repudiate any sense of self and acquiesce unhesitatingly to the demands of their elders. While the emphasis on the inherently evil nature of children was more characteristic of Protestants, especially evangelical Protestants, it colored the thinking of Catholics as well, leading them to practice similar psychological methods of child-rearing. But as this essay has also tried to demonstrate, this new psychological approach was intended for boys far more than for girls. By their very nature girls were thought to be less educable because they were more sexual and prey to libidinous emotions.

Consequently, during the early modern period they were subject to increasing restrictions in terms of both their physical mobility and intellectual pursuits. My contention is that it impossible to understand why these restrictions should have come into place without taking into account the profound changes occurring in early modern culture at large and the repercussions these changes had on attitudes toward the female sex.

We cannot understand why early modern educators and parents alike advocated a more restricted education for girls without an appreciation of the anxiety over gender relationships and gender stereotypes that were a central feature of the period. Schama has commented on the unparalleled degree of misogyny characteristic of early modern satires and comedies, wondering what caused it: "Just why this period saw a flowering of these biting anti-feminine comedies remain mysterious and merits serious investigation."⁸⁷ The short answer is that in times of conflict, uncertainty, and cultural change females are singled out as the barometer of social well-being; if they are kept in their place and suitably subordinated to males, all will be well; if not, chaos will reign.

But the view of females as feeble-minded, physically weak, and in need of male domination simply did not fit the facts, as Margaret Ezell has made abundantly clear in her book *The Patriarch's Wife*.⁸⁸ As much as the ideal of submissive, silent

them to run back and forth among each other, or to have any disorderly relations with each other or to slip together."

⁸⁷ Schama, *An Embarrassment of Riches*, 668.

⁸⁸ Margaret J.M. Ezell, *The Patriarch's Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* (Chapel Hill:

female appealed to male psyches, the image of the unmarried, rapaciously seductive female and shrewish, over-bearing, witch-like wife kept reappearing as the dark side of their prescriptive ideology.⁸⁹ Even more frightening were females who lived outside of marriage and the traditional family, and thus, outside direct male supervision. Frances Dolan claims that the anxiety these females provoked lies behind the feminization of the crime of infanticide and witchcraft.⁹⁰

I would suggest that we find the same ambiguity and the same underlying fear and hostility to females in Catholic discourses about gender. Vives is a case in point. Because his book on the education of young women was intended as a didactic work of instruction, he felt compelled to offer historical examples of the way women should act, but each time he does this his conviction that women are inherently incapable of following such examples subverts the ostensible meaning of the text.

On an even more basic level, Vives's theoretical, one might say prescriptive, view of what women should be, namely chaste, silent, and utterly subservient to men, conflicts time and time again with his own descriptions of heroic women who defend, succor, and save their husbands by taking the initiative and being anything but passive, submissive, and utterly dependent. Vives, like the other authors quoted in this essay, reflects the amorphous, unsettled, and essentially "new" conditions occasioned by the Reformation and the growth of a proto-capitalist economy and the inevitable repercussions both had on traditional ideals of gender and gender relations.

The Protestant commitment to the ideal of the "equality of all believers," the growth of the middle class, and emergence of the nuclear family undercut the age-old ideal of the utterly subservient and subordinate female in significant ways. The attempt to reassert the old verities (which, of course, were never really ever in place) that we see especially clearly in books on the education of girls led to a reassertion of male supremacy that verged on caricature. Unfortunately, this imposition of new and more rigid gender stereotypes played out in a very unhumorous way, in the burning of approximately 35,000 witches, ca. 29,000 of whom were female. Witches were, of course, the utterly bad, promiscuous, wolf-like females, described by Vives, who lured men into filthy degeneracy. Just

University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

⁸⁹ Sigrid Brauner, *Fearless Wives and Frightened Shrews: The Construction of the Witch in Early Modern Germany*, ed. Robert H. Brown (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995).

⁹⁰ Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representation of Domestic Crime in England, 1550–1700* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994). As Dolan comments: "... female separatism suggests the frightening possibility of an alternative social space dominated by women. Representations of this threatening space outside the patriarchal household are especially infrequent in the drama, which rarely focuses on women who are neither married nor to be married" (14–15). Descriptions of the witches' Sabbath epitomize male fears of what goes on in separate female spaces.

imagine how much a young girl would learn about her proper role by watching a single witch burn!

Christopher Carlsmith

(University of Massachusetts-Lowell)

The Child in the Classroom

Teaching a Course on the History of Childhood in Premodern Europe

Introduction

This volume offers close to two dozen scholarly contributions to the history of childhood between 800 and 1700 AD. Based on archival research and literary analysis, these comparative essays present novel and nuanced arguments about the history of childhood from a researcher's perspective. In the belief that teaching and research are often two sides of the same coin, this essay examines some of the pedagogical issues inherent in constructing and teaching a course on the history of childhood in premodern Europe. A brief survey of the scholarly literature, academic conferences, and classroom offerings devoted to the history of childhood reveals few models and little information about the design and delivery of such a course.¹ Of course the history of childhood is still a relatively young field, but

¹ The conference organized in April 2004 by Albrecht Classen at the University of Arizona, which inspired this volume, is the only one I am aware of that has focused on medieval and early modern conceptions of childhood. A one-day conference at UC Berkeley in Oct. 2003 sought to examine the history of childhood in a global context, but the medieval and early modern eras were conspicuously absent. A three-day symposium in Classics and Art History at Dartmouth College in Nov. 2003 focused on the history of childhood in Ancient Greece. The *History of Childhood Quarterly* was founded in 1973 but within three years became the *Journal of Psychohistory*. The rise of the Internet has expanded our ability to locate appropriate resources for the history of earlier childhoods, but the focus of H-Childhood, an online service of H-NET, is symptomatic of the problem. Virtually none of the articles, book reviews, or other postings on H-Childhood pertain to subjects prior to the seventeenth century. Many course offerings include Medieval/Renaissance childhood as a singular topic within family history or women's history, but few dedicated courses exist. One exception is Nicholas Sammond's innovative interdisciplinary course at Washington University. Other courses on the earlier history of childhood include those offered by Sam Cohn at the University of Glasgow, Josephine Davis at Western Michigan State, John Somerville at the University of Florida, and William Reese at the University of Wisconsin. Marah Gubar's interactive web site on "History of Childhood and Children's Literature" at the University of Pittsburgh looks as if it should be very useful when it is complete.

comparable areas of study have developed specialized journals, websites, and scholarly gatherings, as well as an array of courses at various institutions, to document past research, disseminate new ideas, and guide future endeavors. In my experience, while the history of modern American and European childhood has been carefully analyzed and regularly taught, the earlier roots of this subject have not been examined or taught with equal care.

It may be useful at the outset to declare what this essay does not seek to accomplish. It does not review recent scholarship or previous historiography except as these pertain to classroom teaching. It does not adopt a highly theoretical approach nor does it contain a curricular check sheet. It does not consider foreign-language sources or archival materials because such documents are not easily accessible to our students. Rather, this essay ponders the rationale, the resources, and the risk-reward ratio of teaching a course on the history of childhood in Medieval and Renaissance Europe, broadly defined as 800–1600 AD. These “3 R’s” lie at the heart of any course. Intended for classroom teachers, this essay discusses a variety of readings, assignments, and other resources for a course on the history of childhood in premodern Europe.²

Rationale

The rationales for a course on Medieval and Renaissance Childhood are many, and probably self-evident to readers of this volume. As Albrecht Classen has observed in his introduction, childhood studies represent an unusually fertile area for cross-disciplinary research.³ Such a course offers history, psychology, literature, art history, and education majors a chance to apply their training to a common field, thus promoting an interdisciplinary approach. Secondly, it appeals to students and scholars who want to move away from the history of elites, and instead learn more about social history and the daily life of groups that have been marginalized or silenced in the past. Although scholarship has increased exponentially in the past three decades, it remains possible to grasp the contours of the field and to read many of the principal authors in one semester. Furthermore, the pivotal role of Philippe Aries in the 1960s, who claimed there was no concept of childhood in the Middle Ages, provides a convenient yardstick for students; many of them quickly

² In the Fall of 2004, I taught a class at UMass Lowell entitled “Childhood in Premodern Europe”, and my experiences in that class form the basis of this essay; many of the course materials are available through the course website, <http://faculty.uml.edu/ccarlsmith/teaching/43.329> (last accessed on March 14, 2005). All cited texts appear in the bibliography. Footnotes contain specific references and additional comments.

³ Classen, “Philippe Aries and the Consequences.” See also Hugh Cunningham’s call for cross-disciplinary conversations in his review essay, “Histories of Childhood,” *American Historical Review* 103, 4 (Oct. 1998): 1195–1208; here 1196.

grasp the importance of historiography in a way that had eluded them previously when they realize the extent to which later scholarship has responded to Aries' provocative theses. These students came to understand that history is not a desiccated set of agreed-upon facts, but rather subject to continuing interpretation and disagreement. Perhaps most importantly, the experience of childhood is one that all human beings share, for we have all been children once, and many of us experience it vicariously as parents or teachers. Thus every student (and teacher) should be able to identify with the struggles and successes of childhood, even in such seemingly distant locales as medieval London or early modern Holland. Equally important to this commonality, however, is the fact that the experience of childhood is also marked by tremendous diversity across time and space. Thus—as my students learned to their chagrin—the conclusions reached about children in Renaissance Florence or late medieval Germany cannot easily be generalized to other eras and regions.

The reasons above, while certainly valid, could easily be applied to promoting the study of modern childhood in America or elsewhere. What, then, is especially worthwhile about studying the history of childhood in Medieval and Renaissance Europe? The simple answer, of course, is that we need to know about the roots of modern practices in order to understand their contemporary application. Thus medieval conceptions of literacy, sin or paedobaptism, may have a great deal to do with the ideas of Emile Rousseau, Maria Montessori, or Dr. Spock. Enlightenment philosophers and modern psychologists did not create theories of infancy or child development out of a vacuum, but instead drew upon earlier beliefs about the Ages of Man. A second rationale is that such a course can combat the Whiggish view of history that pervades our society. Too many of our students arrive firmly convinced that modern Western society is the most advanced, most humane, and most progressive in the history of humankind, and they are reluctant to entertain the idea that a prior age might have held similar—or even superior—ideas or practices. Third, a course on the history of childhood offers the opportunity to witness a paradigm shift in mid-stride, as the field strives to balance the “black legend” of Philippe Ariès, Lawrence Stone, Edward Shorter, or Lloyd DeMause with the “white legend” of Linda Pollock or Shulamith Shahar. Alternative schools of thought are bubbling up based on new evidence as the old edifice totters. In this sense, a course on the history of childhood is a cutting-edge phenomena.

Primary and Secondary Sources

Reconstructing the history of childhood is far from easy. Happily, the outpouring of scholarship in recent decades has expanded the choice of classroom texts and allows for greater specialization in specific areas. Below I discuss some of the major texts suitable for such a course, beginning with modern scholarship and concluding with primary sources.

In my experience, one has to begin with a sizeable chunk of Philippe Ariès' *Centuries of Childhood* (1962), so that students are immediately acquainted with the style and methodology of this important French historian. Since many subsequent articles and monographs disagree with Ariès, it's important not to view him simply as a straw man but to allow students the chance to wrestle with his ideas in some depth. Students also need to evaluate the types of textual and visual sources that Ariès did, and did not, utilize to build his argument. Reading Ariès also offers the opportunity to discuss the pitfalls of reading a work in translation; as Hugh Cunningham points out, a key phrase in Ariès' work has been mistranslated, resulting in decades of misunderstanding.⁴ Such a caution is especially worthwhile in a course of this nature where so many of the sources will be read in translation. My students found it amusing that nearly every preface or opening footnote since 1970 announced the intention to expand, correct, or demolish Ariès; yet it also reminded them of Ariès' importance to the field and his place at the beginning of the syllabus. Analyses of Ariès' influence are by now commonplace; the comments of Adrian Wilson and Linda Pollock are among the most detailed. If time permits, students could read the work of those who sought to extend Ariès' thesis: for example, Edward Shorter, Lawrence Stone, or Elisabeth Badinter.

The opening week is also a good opportunity to provide some historiographical background to students. Barbara Hanawalt's review essay "Medievalists and the Study of Childhood" offers a clear and comprehensive panorama of the relevant issues and authors for the medieval period. My students declared this review essay to be the single most informative reading of the semester, and many returned to it when writing papers or doing independent research. Other review essays are more limited in scope. Mary Katherine Armstrong's recent review considers three books published in 2001 (those by Orme, Kertzer, and Heywood), while Joan Acocella's essay "Little People" covers similar ground for a more general audience in the *New Yorker*. Most review essays, such as that by Kevin Brehony in 1998, typically consider just one pair of books. A welcome exception is Hugh Cunningham's thoughtful analysis in the 1998 *American Historical Review* which takes a very broad view of recent scholarship from the sixteenth to the

⁴ Cunningham, "Histories of Childhood," 1197.

twentieth century. Cunningham contextualizes Aries by demonstrating how multiple authors have analyzed childhood in Europe, America, and even non-Western regions such as China in response to his earlier work.

In order to introduce students to different kinds of historical writing, I chose three diverse classroom texts. For the first third of the course, on medieval Europe, Barbara Hanawalt's *Growing up in Medieval London* blends qualitative and quantitative sources, including poetry, literature, court cases, orphan records, and coroner's lists. The drawings at the beginning of each chapter intrigued students, although they had mixed reactions to her "experimental" stories blending composite statistics into a semi-fictional story of one child. Some students found them entertaining and illustrative, others repetitive and dull. Like most histories of childhood, Hanawalt follows a life-cycle approach with chapters on birth, early childhood, education and training, adolescence, and "coming-of-age" ceremonies. Additional chapters on apprenticeship, servanthood, and the impact of London's material culture on children provide a rich and stimulating portrait. *Growing up in Medieval London* offers extensive documentation in the endnotes, although only a few of her sources will be easily accessible to American students. Nevertheless, it benefits from a clear and engaging style with excellent details about daily life. Widely available in paperback, Hanawalt's book was a popular choice for the first book.

The second classroom text was Louis Haas' *The Renaissance Man and his Children: Childbirth and Early Childhood in Florence, 1300–1600*. Based on his dissertation and a painstaking examination of hundreds of *ricordanze* and *ricordi* ("memory books") in Florentine archives, Haas' monograph was the most narrowly-focused of our texts. Not only was it limited to one city, but he only considered children from ages zero to six, whereas Hanawalt tracked them into and even out of adolescence. This limited scope led to a profitable discussion about exceptionalism: can the Florentine experience be taken as representative of Renaissance Europe or is it such an unusual case that we cannot generalize? For example, the authors of *ricordanze* were overwhelmingly male and economically successful, and they lived in a locale and era famous for its creativity. Are such fathers truly characteristic of broader trends in parenting and child-raising? One could, of course raise the same concern about many historical and literary works, as James Schultz does for his own German literary sources before concluding that "they are the best we have."⁵ Haas' book adopts a more conversational tone, which made it popular with students. His discussion of childhood's historiography at the outset was a useful reminder to students of the "big issues" and clarified Haas' own position. In addition to archival manuscripts, Haas drew upon well-known letters by Petrarch and Boccaccio as well as treatises like Leon Battista Alberti's *On Family* and

⁵ Schultz, *Knowledge of Childhood* 13.

Giovanni Dominici's *On The Education of Children*. We too read these primary sources simultaneously with our analysis of Haas, a process students found to be illuminating and exhilarating. One drawback of Haas' book for classroom use is its high price of \$70.

The third common text was Konrad Eisenbichler's *The Premodern Teenager: Youth and Society, 1150–1650*, featuring a collection of essays (including one of my own). After two months of studying infants, toddlers, and children, we now turned to adolescents and youths to see if similar societal expectations and legal standards were applied.⁶ The choice of an edited volume, rather than another monograph, was deliberate. The intention was to allow students to explore a range of subjects in the history of childhood as they began to prepare their own research topics. The sometimes eclectic nature of the volume also underscored the burgeoning number of subjects that now fall under the aegis of history of childhood. As the most recently published of all our secondary texts, this volume seems to have moved beyond the Ariès paradigm, for he is scarcely mentioned. Ariès' virtual disappearance led to a fruitful discussion about future areas of research in the history of childhood, which was again productive for students beginning their own research projects. My students enjoyed reading about these teenagers because they could identify more closely with them than they could with younger children. As with all edited volumes, however, some essays were more popular than others. Even this experience, however, became a teachable moment, about which characteristics are necessary for an effective and successful essay. Students had to defend their favorites and provide reasoned criticism of essays that they found lacking.

There are a number of other texts that could be used to replace or supplement the three described above. For the Middle Ages, Sally Crawford's *Childhood in Anglo-Saxon England* emphasizes the early medieval experience, as well as teaching students about archaeological evidence. *The Knowledge of Childhood in the German Middle Ages, 1100–1350*, by James Schultz, relies heavily upon the vast High Middle German literary corpus, arguing that regular historical documents "waste hardly a word on children" while literary texts are rich with meaning for the culturally constructed meaning of childhood. Ivan Marcus' *Ritual of Childhood: Jewish Acculturation in Medieval Europe* is dense, repetitive, and of little use to students without a strong foundation in Jewish history and culture. Shulamith Shahar's *Childhood in the Middle Ages (500–1500 AD)* is very comprehensive and buttressed with examples, but would have crowded out other readings. Other alternative classroom texts for the Middle Ages might include John Boswell's *The Kindness of Strangers* and Ronald Finucane's *The Rescue of Innocents*. Both consider the dangers faced by medieval children in Europe and the myriad ways in which

⁶ Ilana Ben-Amos' essay in *History of the Human Sciences* analyzes adolescence in light of Ariès' theories, and can prove useful for more advanced students.

society responded (or ignored) their plight. Daniele Alexandre-Bidon and Didier Lett, in *Children in the Middle Ages from the Fifth to the Fifteenth Centuries*, also consider the ravages of war and disease upon children, although their analysis of iconography, law codes, miracle accounts, and so forth ultimately comes to a positive conclusion that children were deeply loved.

In response to the modern emphasis on multiculturalism and a global (or 'world') approach to the past, some teachers may wish to explore a brief volume by Avner Gil'adi: *Children of Islam: Concepts of childhood in Medieval Muslim Society* reviews how theological, juridical, medical, and educational texts from the tenth to the fourteenth century comment upon children's role in Islamic society. In my opinion, the best book on children in the Middle Ages is Nicholas Orme's *Medieval Children*. Not only does it benefit from Orme's decades of research into medieval education, but Yale University Press agreed to include dozens of color images on all aspects of childhood. These images are excellent for illustrating classroom lectures. Clear organization, a friendly index, and mastery of the sources all make this book a winner. The book is only available in hardback, however, and the level of detail would have been daunting to my students. Still, it is likely to be included in a future iteration of this course, and would be ideal for a graduate-level seminar.

For the Italian Renaissance, alternate classroom texts might include Philip Gavitt's *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence: Ospedale degli Innocenti, 1410–1536* or Margaret King's *The Death of the Child Valerio Marcello*. Both are well-told narratives with children at their center. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber has published a variety of work on childhood in Renaissance Italy, although her pessimistic conclusions can be jarring for students. Konrad Eisenbichler's extended study of a youth confraternity in Florence over nearly four centuries provides insight into religious rituals, theatre, and games for Italian youth. Children's education in the Italian Renaissance has been brilliantly summarized by Paul Grendler, although his conclusions have been challenged by Robert Black. Although Black and Grendler disagree about the role of humanists and the impact of the "new learning" in the Renaissance, their astute observations about expectations for children from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century are very useful indeed. Beyond Italy, Charles Carlton's *Royal Childhoods* offers chapter-length biographies of about a dozen British kings and queens, even if some of the essays say as much about the protagonists' adulthood as about their childhood. Steven Ozment's *Ancestors* and *When Fathers Ruled* includes chapters on children in the Age of Reformations, drawing upon medical literature of childbirth and childhood disease. Peter Katalin has edited a volume of essays entitled *Beloved Children: History of Aristocratic Childhood in Hungary in the Early Modern Age*. These latter books, however, reflect a tendency to focus on elite and privileged children. A similar criticism might be leveled at Linda Pollock's *Forgotten Children*, which

draws upon 400–500 diaries of the early modern period to vehemently disagree with Ariès' conclusions. Of course the sources are more abundant for elite children, but my students were eager to find works that showed children of all social levels.

Lastly, there are at least two edited volumes on the experience of childhood. However, *History of Childhood*, ed. Lloyd DeMause, or *A History of Young People in the West*, vol. I, ed. Giovanni Levi and Jean-Claude Schmitt, cover too broad a period of time to be practical for this type of class. On the other hand, they can be extremely useful to faculty looking for lecture material and they provide a panoramic view. Elizabeth Crouzet-Pavan's essay on medieval Italian childhood in the DeMause volume is especially interesting.

Primary Sources⁷

Identifying appropriate primary sources for the history of childhood presents a special challenge. Children do not write their own history, even if many adults later penned memoirs and autobiographies. The experience of children, like that of women, was considered by most literate people in this era to be unimportant and thus rarely recorded. Material culture (e.g., clothes, toys) rarely survives for hundreds of years. Pedagogical treatises (e.g., Dominici or Erasmus) in the premodern period often include a religious or moral purpose, and thus tell us more about adults than children. In an era before the bureaucratized state had learned to gather information systematically, quantitative sources (e.g., the *catasto* of Florence) are problematic at best. Literature (e.g., Chaucer or Boccaccio) can be a vehicle for understanding the ethos and dominant values of the time, but rarely speaks to the actual experience of real children. Theological and philosophical tracts (e.g., Augustine or Abelard) are often too dense for undergraduate students, even if they are available in translation. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify primary sources that speak to the experience of being a child in premodern Europe. Wills and testaments, catechism manuals, legislative acts, correspondence, court cases, birth and death rates, artwork, saints' lives, plays and novels, educational materials: the list is extensive and continues to grow as more scholars enter the field. The challenge is always to find suitable editions in English that students will be able to analyze.

The treatises and traditions of the Classical world, and particularly those of the

⁷ The most useful bibliography that I have found is compiled by Margaret King at CUNY: <http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/history/kmg/BiblioChild.htm#Sources> (last accessed on March 14, 2005). It organizes works on childhood by time period, with a special section for primary sources, to which this essay is indebted. H-Childhood's book reviews and bibliography largely exclude medieval and Renaissance Europe by focusing on America.

Romans, provided the foundation for later views of children. Quintilian's *Oratorical Institutions* and Plutarch's *The Education of Children* provide great detail for normative views of Roman children and their education. Briefer excerpts from Horace, Martial, Pliny the Younger, and Julius Victor are available online, as is a letter from Cicero's son describing his educational experience in Athens with Greek tutors.⁸ Jane Gardner's and Thomas' Wiesemann's *The Roman Household: A Sourcebook* includes a smorgasbord of different documents on Roman family life. For the Greek world, a superb exhibition catalog entitled *Coming of Age in Ancient Greece: Images of childhood from the Classical Past*, ed. Jenifer Neils, includes many photographs of sculptures, vases, and toys, as well as half a dozen essays on boys, girls, games, athletics, and toys in the Greek world. Plato's *Meno* and *Lysis*, and a short excerpt from Herondas about flogging recalcitrant Greek youth, offer additional primary source readings.⁹ As Mary Dzon mentions in her article in this volume, information about the boyhood of Jesus Christ is largely a late-medieval addition to the earlier Gospels. Thus it is very useful for medieval conceptions of childhood, but much less so for the first century AD. Other Christian sources, such as Augustine's *Confessions* or John Chrysostom's "Address on Vainglory and the Right Way for Parents to Bring Up their Children" can prove useful too.

For the early Middle Ages, primary sources on childhood can be challenging to find and to teach. In Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne* (ca. 830) the author says explicitly at the beginning of the work that he will not discuss Charlemagne's own childhood as he was not present to witness it. Later descriptions of Charlemagne's treatment of his own children are intriguing but too brief for substantive analysis. One reliable source with which Einhard can be compared is Dhuoda's "Letter to William", written ca. 840 by a noblewoman to advise her faraway son in another noble's court. An early example of a woman's own writing, and one of the few easily available in English translation, the straightforward didactic letter emphasizes maternal love and emotional attachment. It also underscores the religiosity of the ninth century. Valerie Garver's essay, too, emphasizes the religiosity of the Carolingian era and the importance of children's training, whether in a secular or monastic context. She skillfully uses excerpts from *vitae*, monastic rules, and hagiographic sources, but sadly for our purposes very few of her sources are available in English.

Peter Abelard's letter to his son Astrolabe was composed three centuries later (ca. 1135) and represents a much more challenging analysis (see the contribution of Juanita Feros Ruys in this volume). Like so many of the other primary sources

⁸ All these documents are available at the Internet History Sourcebook, ed. Paul Halsall; the URL is <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/asbook09.html#Education> (last accessed on March 14, 2005).

⁹ Also at the Internet History Sourcebook (last accessed on March 14, 2005): <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/asbook07.html#Education>.

about children, Abelard's letter intends to advise his son—but in typical Abelardian fashion, he prompts more questions than answers. Daniel T. Kline's *Medieval Literature for Children* contains brief scholarly introductions and longer excerpts from sixteen medieval texts, grouped into five categories of didactic and moral literature, courtesy and conduct literature, educational and instructional literature, religious literature, and popular literature. These provide an excellent way for students to become familiar with the fables, dialogues, poetry, and primers intended for children. Nicole Clifton's essay in this volume also considers children's literature via her analysis of the Auchinleck Manuscript, created between 1330 and 1340 and containing narratives of interest to both parents and children. Briefer snippets on the theme of medieval education, including excerpts from Guibert de Nogent, Chaucer, and *Piers Plowman*, represent yet one more path to illuminating childhood.¹⁰ Other medieval sources, such as those by Walter of Bibbesworth, Jacobus de Voragine, Caesarius of Heisterbach, and Bartholomew Anglicus, are brought to light elsewhere in this volume. All of these medieval authors seem to agree that childhood was a special state of being, quite different from adolescence or adulthood. Yet their texts remain difficult to incorporate readily into classroom use.

Primary sources of the Italian Renaissance, by contrast, are much more abundant and accessible. Giovanni Dominici's *Regola del governo di cura familiare* (1401) illustrates a churchman's view of how children should be raised in the early fifteenth century. An important preacher in Florence, Dominici composed this treatise at the request of a noblewoman who was concerned about how to raise her children. Dominici's emphasis upon morality, tradition, and religious observance contrasts beautifully with a contemporaneous document, Leon Battista Alberti's *De familia* [On Family] (1430s).¹¹ The original "Renaissance Man," Alberti published treatises on an enormous number of subjects, from optics to painting to architecture; one of his most well-known discourses is this one in which he explains his view of a Renaissance family. Alberti emphasizes filial obedience and the inculcation of virtue, along with frequent Classical references and a humanist optimism. My students were absorbed by a comparison of these two Florentines and their respective views on children's education, exercise, prayer, and duty. Other Renaissance humanists wrote extensively about how children ought to be educated; the works of Leonardo Bruni, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, Battista Guarino, and Pier Paolo Vergerio, to name only four, are among the most

¹⁰ At the Internet History Sourcebook:

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/medieval-memory.html> (last accessed on March 14, 2005).

¹¹ See the study by Juliann Vitullo in this volume.

accessible.¹² Bruni's letter to Battista Malatesta (1405) enumerated the differences between a boy's and a girl's education, while Vergerius' letter to Ubertinus of Padua (1392) championed the liberal arts. The *ricordanze* of Florentine men are not yet broadly available in English, although works by Gene Brucker and Iris Origo can provide a glimpse of personal and professional activities in fifteenth-century Italy. In the sixteenth century, primary sources beyond Italy abound: the works of Englishman Roger Ascham (*The Schoolmaster*), Spaniard Juan Luis Vives (*On Education*), Frenchman Michel de Montaigne (*On the Education of Children*), and Dutchman Desiderius Erasmus (*Handbook for a Christian Prince, Behavior Befitting Well-Bred Youth*) were highly influential, and are easily obtained today. Allison P. Coudert and David Grazibord offer intriguing analyses in this volume for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century prescriptive sources, including Martin Luther's treatises and some cases from the Inquisition, respectively.

Assignments

Every instructor will design different assignments, depending upon available resources, student interest, and course content. The following suggestions reflect one instructor's experience and the feedback obtained from his students. These assignments were designed to introduce or sharpen student skills in reading, writing, listening, public speaking, collaboration, and independent research. They were tied to the specific goals of one course, but of course could be adapted to suit other syllabi. For example, one assignment requires students to identify and discuss a primary source on childhood from the Classical, Medieval, or Early Modern world. The source chosen can be brief but it must go beyond what has already been discussed in class (I provide my students a brief bibliography of primary sources to guide their selections). A second assignment asks students to peruse several scholarly book reviews and then write their own review of a new book pertaining to childhood. These reviews were later circulated among all students so that they could become familiar with additional works of scholarship in this field, and with varying interpretations of those works. A third assignment entailed serving as discussion leader for one week; most students simply handed out a list of questions but others designed creative games and one even brought in sample medicines and toys used by her grandparents to raise children. The final assignment called for independent research in collaboration with fellow students on an emerging topic in the history of childhood, followed by a group multimedia presentation. Several of my students created a mock documentary ("mockumen-

¹² For the translated texts, see *Vittorino da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators*, ed. William H. Woodward; more recently, see *Humanist Educational Treatises*, ed. and trans. Craig W. Kallendorf, which includes facing Latin/English translations.

tary”) on medieval childhood in which they donned costumes to act out major themes we had studied (e.g., childhood accidents, baptism, swaddling, education). Others utilized powerpoint slides, created large poster boards, and developed Web pages. Each of these assignments was designed to replicate the research and presentation skills needed by professional historians. Students could also be asked to write a personal essay about their own childhood; to conduct an oral history interview with a senior citizen about how childhood has changed in the twentieth century; or even to compile a dossier of primary sources on their own childhood and then compare that with the historical documents of centuries ago. With access to a local museum or even a good virtual collection of art, students can examine images of childhood from different eras and relate those images to textual primary sources. We were fortunate to have a guided tour at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, where the evolving depiction of the medieval Christ child, and the introduction of early modern family portraits, vividly illustrated topics we had covered earlier in the semester.

Evaluations

At the conclusion of the course, fifteen of twenty students completed anonymous online evaluations in which they assessed the course’s content, pedagogy, assignments, instructor, and overall structure. Half gave the course their highest rating and nearly 80% described the course as excellent or good. One student praised the study of childhood’s history as “a new area of study in which this course is unique and fundamental.” The seminar-style discussions of primary sources were the most popular aspect of the class. Students liked the chance to read the original sources each week and to compare their own analyses with that of professional historians. Although sometimes shocked by references to corporal punishment or the amount of labor expected of a young child, my students discovered numerous ways in which their own lives resembled that of medieval and Renaissance children. This sparked an empathy with historical figures, and led my students to consider the extant sources more carefully than usual. Student evaluations further praised the course for improving their ability to analyze and debunk historical myths, such as the idea that few medieval parents loved their children. Students began to grasp the complexity of working with historical documents that are prescriptive or didactic or that largely ignore the subject in which the researcher is interested. In sum, the evaluations were positive and enthusiastic about the course content and structure.

Conclusion

The purpose of this essay has been to discuss some of the issues inherent in teaching an undergraduate course on the history of medieval and Renaissance childhood (ca. 800–1600 AD). Such courses, in my experience, are few and far between yet they offer a host of benefits to student and instructor alike. Such benefits include the opportunity to work on interdisciplinary topics, to witness a sub-field in transition, and to explore a topic that is accessible and of great interest to students. In contrast to other historical topics that I have taught (e.g., Renaissance-Reformation), in which the historiography is extensive and the range of issues potentially overwhelming, this course appealed to my students precisely because they felt they could grasp its major issues quickly. The low number of primary sources available in English translation for the early and high Middle Ages remains a challenge, but for later centuries the increasing number of documents is encouraging. As this volume demonstrates, more and more scholars are including the history of childhood in their own work, a development which bodes well for the future of the child in the classroom.

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CONTRIBUTORS

TRACY ADAMS received a Ph.D. in French from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1998. Senior lecturer in French at the University of Auckland, she has also taught for the University of Maryland, University College. She has published on the twelfth-century French romance and Christine de Pizan. Her monograph, *Violent Passions: Managing Love in the Old French Verse Romance*, will appear in 2005 with Palgrave Macmillan.

DIANE PETERS AUSLANDER is a Graduate Student in History at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. She is currently working on her dissertation, "Three Saints in Four Lives: a Contextual Study of the Hagiography of St. Modwenna." She has given papers at various conferences and published several articles including "Gendering the *Vita Prima*: an Examination of St. Brigid's Role as Mary of the Gael," in the forthcoming *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*. She has taught at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Rutgers University and is currently working at John Jay as the recipient of a CUNY Writing Fellowship.

CHRISTOPHER CARLSMITH is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell. He teaches courses on the history of Medieval and Renaissance Europe, Colonial Latin America, Western Civilization, and (most recently) Childhood in Premodern Europe. He has published scholarly articles, in both Italian and English, on the history of education in early modern Italy. A Fulbright Fellow in 1996-97, he also held a post-doctoral fellowship at Stanford University in 2001.

ALBRECHT CLASSEN is University Distinguished Professor of German Studies at the University of Arizona, Tucson. He has published numerous books on the German Middle Ages in their European context, recently focusing on topical issues such as *The Book and the Magic of Reading in the Middle Ages* (1999), *Medieval German Voices in the 21st Century* (2000), *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages* (2002), and *Violence in Medieval Courtly Literature: A Casebook* (2004). He has published monographs on social communication in the Middle Ages (*Verzweiflung und Hoffnung*, 2002), on late-medieval German songbooks (2001), on the German chapbook, *The German Volksbuch: A Critical History of a Late-Medieval Genre* (1995), and on autobiographical poetry in the late Middle Ages (1991). In several books

he explored the history of late-medieval German women's poetry (1999, 2000, 2002, and 2004). Most recently he published *Late-Medieval German Women's Poetry* (2004) and *Discourses on Love, Marriage, and Transgression in Medieval and Early Modern Literature* (2004). A monograph on medieval and early-modern German marriage sermons, tracts, and poems is forthcoming. In 2004 the government of the Federal Republic of Germany awarded him with the "Bundesverdienstkreuz am Band" (Order of Merit). He serves as editor of *Tristania* and co-editor of *Mediaevistik*.

NICOLE CLIFTON is Associate Professor in the English Department at Northern Illinois University. With degrees from the University of California at Berkeley and Cornell, she specializes in Middle English literature, particularly on the romance and its sources in Old French literature. Her publications include "Of Arthour and of Merlin as Medieval Children's Literature," in *Arthuriana*, "The Function of Childhood in Amis and Amiloun," in *Mediaevalia*, and "Teaching and Studying the Middle English Romance: New Directions, Affiliations, and Pleasures of the Text," on-line through Blackwell's Literature Compass. She is currently working on a book about the Auchinleck manuscript. Her teaching interests include Chaucer, the Arthurian tradition, and epics from around the world.

ALLISON P. COUDERT currently holds the Paul and Marie Castelfanco Chair in the History of Religions in the Religious Studies Program at the University of Californai at Davis. Her primary areas of research are in religion and science and women and religion. Her publications include: *The Impact of the Kabbalah in the Seventeenth Century: The Life and Thought of Francis Mercury van Helmont* (Leiden: Brill, 1999); *Leibniz and the Kabbalah* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1995); "The Myth of the Improved Status of Protestant Women: The Case of the Witchcraze," *The Politics of Gender in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Jean R. Brink, Allison P. Coudert and Maryanne C. Horowitz. Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, XII (Kirkville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, Inc., 1989), 61-89; *Alchemy: The Philosopher's Stone* (Boulder: Shambhala, 1980).

CAROL DOVER is Associate Professor of French at Georgetown University, Washington, DC, where she teaches medieval French language and literature. She also teaches medieval literature courses for Georgetown's Medieval Studies program, the General Education requirement, and the School for Continuing Education. She has published *A Companion to the Lancelot-Grail Cycle* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), the first comprehensive collaborative volume devoted exclusively to the French *Lancelot-Grail Cycle* and its medieval progeny. Her monograph *Lancelot: Heart of the Cycle*, is forthcoming with D.S. Brewer. Her articles focus primarily on the French prose *Lancelot* and French romance narrative.

Other publications include a guest-edited special issue of *Arthuriana* (12.3) devoted to the French *Lancelot-Grail Cycle*, and English translations of French and German articles on the *Cycle*.

MARY DZON is a visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of English at the University of British Columbia, where she teaches courses on early British literature and medieval studies. Her dissertation (University of Toronto, 2004) focused on the reception of apocryphal infancy legends in late-medieval England. She has articles forthcoming on Margery Kempe's devotion to the Christ-child and the Anglo-Latin poet Walter of Wimborne, which will appear in *Mediaevalia* and the *Journal of Medieval Latin* in 2005.

VALERIE L. GARVER earned her Ph.D. at the University of Virginia with a dissertation on Carolingian aristocratic women. She currently holds a position as Assistant Professor of History at Northern Illinois University. She teaches historical courses on medieval and late antique Europe and interdisciplinary courses in medieval studies. She has a forthcoming article, "Learned Women? Liutberga and the Instruction of Carolingian Women," to appear in the volume *Learned Laity in the Carolingian Era*, ed. Patrick Wormald (Cambridge, 2005) and is currently working on a book entitled *Women and Aristocratic Culture in the Carolingian World*.

DAVID GRAIZBORD is Assistant Professor of Judaic Studies at the University of Arizona (Tucson). He teaches courses on medieval, early modern, and modern Jewish history and culture, including Jewish mysticism and Judeophobia. His book, *Souls in Dispute: Converso Identities in Iberia and the Jewish Diaspora, 1580-1700* (Philadelphia, 2004) is a study of Jewish and Christian identity-construction among *conversos* or New Christians of the seventeenth century. The work is based on extensive research of inquisitorial archives and Sephardi communal history. He has written articles and book chapters on religious renegades, cultural commuters, apostates, and self-styled Jewish missionaries in the western Sephardi Diaspora, Jewish communal formation in early modern France, the Jews of Muslim Spain, and the history of *conversos* after 1492.

KAREN K. JAMBECK is Professor of Medieval Literature and Historical Linguistics at Western Connecticut State University. Her research focuses on Old and Middle English, Anglo-Norman, and Old French texts of the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, medieval literary patronage, scholarly editing, and computer-based textual analysis, and her publications include articles on Marie de France, Geoffrey Chaucer, Alice Chaucer, women as patrons of literature in medieval England, and the reception of medieval texts in the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries. She is currently working on a critical edition of the *Fables* of Marie de France.

JEAN E. JOST is Professor of English at Bradley University, Peoria, Illinois, where she teaches graduate and undergraduate courses on Chaucer, Arthurian Literature, Old and Middle English surveys, Medieval Drama, and Middle English romance. She has published *Ten Middle English Arthurian Romances: A Reference Guide* and edited a collection called *Chaucer's Humor: Critical Essays*. Currently she is editing the Southern Recension of the *Pricke of Conscience*. Her articles have considered Chaucer's Performative Criseyde, masculinities in the Friar's and Summoner's Tales, various Middle English romances (*Amis and Amiloun*, *Awntyrs off Arthur at the Terne Wathelyne*, *The Turke and Gowin*, *Tristan and Isolt*), the poetics of sexual desire in the "Merchant's Tale," The Un-Chaucerian "Tale of Beryn," and lately the Gawain Poet. Her last NEH on the Old French Fabliaux has provided a new interest which she is pursuing.

EVA PARRA MEMBRIVES is Full Professor of German Literature at the University of Sevilla since 1992. She primarily teaches medieval literature and researches women's issues in the Middle Ages. She published books about female authors (Zaragoza 1998), Roswitha von Gandersheim (Madrid 2000), and other important Middle High German poets, such as Wolfram von Eschenbach (Madrid 2004) and Walther von der Vogelweide (Madrid 2004). She has also produced the first Spanish translation of Hartmann von Aue's *Erec* (Valladolid 2004). She was the Director of a research group "Márgenes y minorías en la literatura alemana" at the University of Sevilla.

DANIEL F. PIGG is a Professor of English at The University of Tennessee at Martin. He teaches courses on Chaucer and medieval British literature in addition to courses on the History of the English Language and Restoration and Eighteenth-Century British literature. He has published widely on a variety of medieval British literature, including *Beowulf*, the *Canterbury Tales*, *Piers Plowman*, and medieval romance materials in *Athelston* and Malory's "Tale of Sir Gareth." In a previous article that deals with *The Book of Margery Kempe*, published in *Studia Mystica*, he examined the relationship between medieval textual practices, including those anticipated by her scribes, in connection with the actual and unexpected form of Kempe's narrative.

LAUREL REED is a Ph.D. student at the University of California, San Diego, specializing in the Italian Renaissance. Her dissertation is on cultural identity and exchange in Dalmatia and Venice in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This article on Titian's Portrait of Clarissa Strozzi is part of a larger study on Renais-

sance portraits of children although Clarissa is by far her favorite child sitter. Other research interests include the post-1577 decoration of the Venetian Ducal palace and temporality in Jacopo Bassano's biblical narratives.

JUANITA FEROS RUYS is an Australian Research Council Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at the Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Sydney, working on medieval parental didactic texts and medieval women's Latinate subjectivity. She is co-editor of the volume *Maistresse of My Wit: Medieval Women, Modern Scholars* (Brepols, 2004) which examines the reciprocity that develops between medieval women and the modern scholars who study them. With John O. Ward she is currently completing *The Repentant Abelard: Abelard's Thought as Revealed in his Carmen ad Astralabium and Planctus* (Palgrave, forthcoming) and is also currently preparing an edition of the *Problemata Heloissae* for the Corpus Christianorum series. Her PhD thesis was on twentieth-century readings of Heloise, and she has published a number of papers both on the rhetorical strategies employed by Abelard and Heloise in their writings, and on post-medieval readings of Heloise, including early modern readings of Heloise's Latinity.

MARILYN SANDIDGE is Professor of English at Westfield State College in Westfield, Massachusetts. Besides directing the graduate program in English, she teaches classes in medieval and early modern British literature and the history of the English language. She has published articles and delivered conference papers that examine roles of female characters or family relationships in medieval and Renaissance literature. She has also published articles on issues in professional communication.

DAVID F. TINSLEY is Distinguished Professor of German at the University of Puget Sound. Besides German language and literature, he teaches medieval history and literature in the Humanities Program as well as First-Year Seminars on theodicy and Arthurian romance. Publications include articles on allegories of love, Ulrich von Lichtenstein, Peter Suchenwirt, Wolfram von Eschenbach, and Hartmann von Aue. David is currently completing a book manuscript on the literature of Dominican asceticism.

JULIANN VITULLO is Associate Professor and Coordinator of Italian Studies at Arizona State University (Tempe) and has also served as Associate Chair of the Department of Languages and Literature. She is the author of *The Chivalric Epic in Medieval Italy* (Gainesville, FL, 2000) and the editor of the forthcoming volume *Feast, Famine, and Fasting: Food and Material Consumption in Medieval and Renaissance Culture* (Brepols, Belgium). She is currently working on a book about representations of children and childhood in late medieval and early modern Italy.

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List of Illustrations

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